







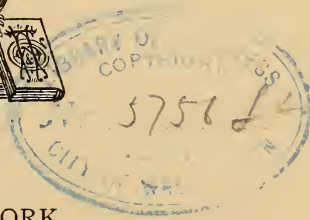
CARD ESSAYS  
CLAY'S DECISIONS  
AND  
CARD-TABLE TALK

BY

"CAVENDISH,"

*Author of "The Laws and Principles of Whist," etc.*

AMERICAN EDITION, WITH AN INDEX.



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TO

EDWARD TAVENER FOSTER,

*This Book*

IS

CORDIALLY DEDICATED,

BY

HIS SINCERE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.





## P R E F A C E.

---

IN the present volume the Author has reproduced (with corrections and numerous augmentations) some miscellaneous papers on subjects connected with Cards, which have hitherto been buried in back numbers of periodicals.

Also, Decisions by the late Mr. Clay, to which some are added that have not been previously published.

The concluding portion of the volume consists of notes of events which have come within the Author's personal experience, at Cards or in connection with Card-players, during the last twenty years.

The matters related as anecdotes have all actu-

ally happened. None have been manufactured for the sake of effect. It is possible that some of the characters may be recognized by a limited circle; but the Author has been careful not to "name names," except where the persons referred to are beyond the pale of offence or injury.

An apology should, perhaps, be tendered for the number of capital "I's" expended in the latter part of the volume. An attempt has been made to keep them down; but it has been found impossible to exclude them when relating personal experiences.

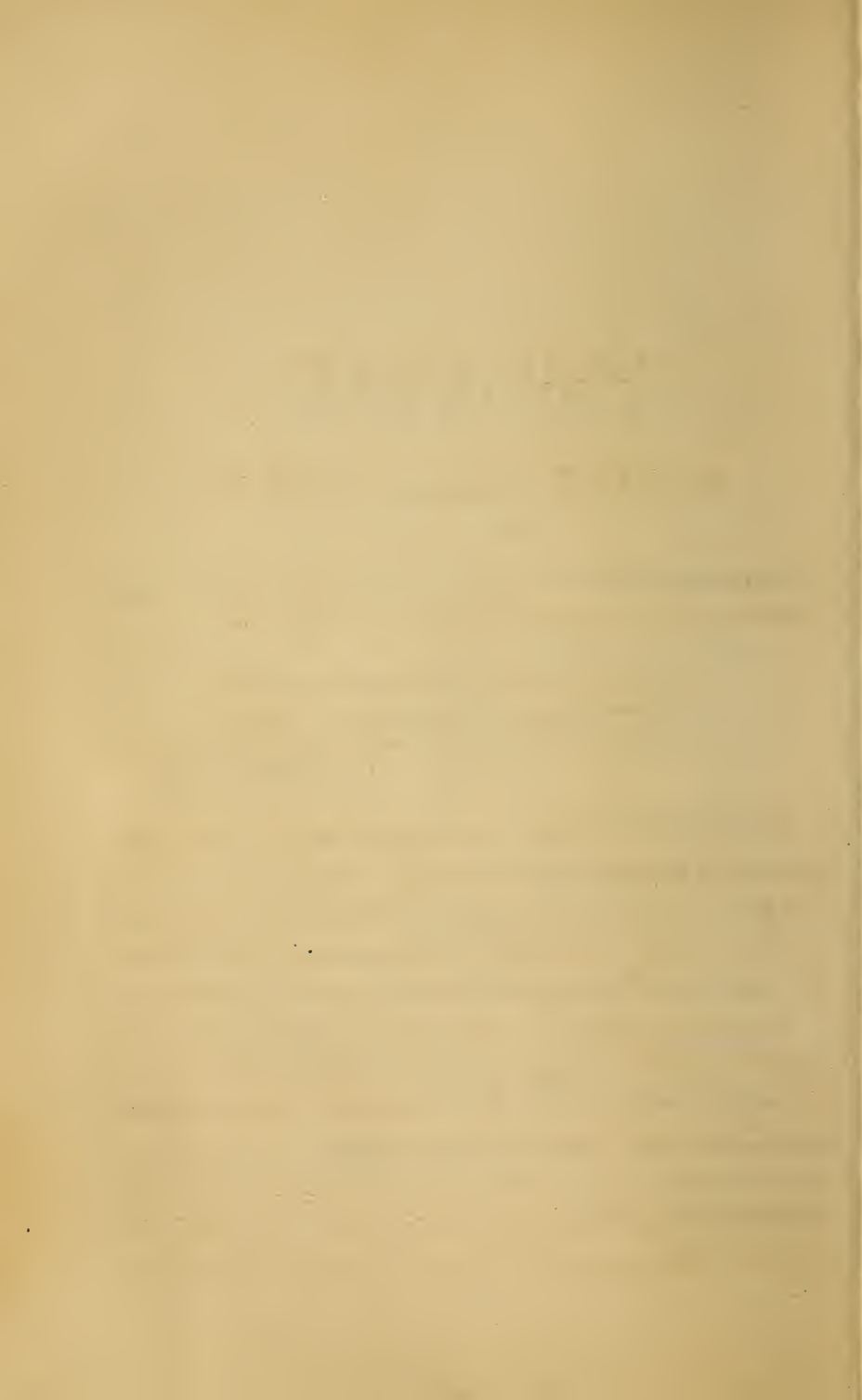
A word as to the frontispiece. The idea of publishing his counterfeit presentment occurred to the Author recently, on discovering that a hideous full-page caricature of himself (purporting to be a portrait) had appeared in a London periodical.

PORTLAND CLUB, *August*, 1879.

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## CARD ESSAYS.

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### WHIST *versus* CHESS.

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“As for the Chesse, I think it over-fond, because it is too over-wise and philosophicke a folly.”—*Basilicon Doron*.

“What Game indeed, of all the num’rous list,  
In point of beauty, can compare to Whist?”

—*Whist, a Poem in twelve Cantos*, by ALEXANDER THOMSON,  
Canto v., l. 27, 28.

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WHIST and CHESS have often been compared; generally to the disadvantage of the former. The votaries of Caissa are loth to admit that any other indoor game will bear comparison with Chess. Let us see what can be said in favor of Whist.

It will be admitted that some games possess a higher generic character than others, just as, in literature, epics rank above ballads. Both Whist and Chess are placed, by common consent, so to speak, in the epic class, and probably, as regards sedentary games, those two only. If, then, we inquire what game it is that, in largeness of con-

ception and in fitness for purposes of recreation, transcends every other, the reply will be found by comparing the claims of Whist and Chess.

First, as to the intellectual faculties brought into exercise by the two games. Chess may be described as a series of analytical problems, in which the business of the player having the move is to determine his correct play from certain data. One mental power only then is requisite for the Chess player, viz., the power of analysis. It was the possession of this faculty in unusual perfection which enabled Deschappelles to beat the best players of his time after four days' practice, and by what he called a sudden impulse to stamp Chess upon his brain. "I mastered the moves," he said, "played with Bernard who had succeeded Philidor, as the monarch of the board. I lost the first day, and the second, and third; but I beat him even-handed on the fourth, since when I have never either advanced or receded. To me, Chess has been a single idea, which, once acquired, cannot be displaced from its throne, provided the intellect remains unimpaired."

There is no similar experience of Whist having been suddenly learnt, though there might be of Double Dummy, which, like Chess, presents a definite problem for solution. No man, not even Deschappelles himself (the finest Whist player, according to Clay, the world has ever seen), could

learn to play Whist tolerably in four days. Deschapelles wrote on this point : " A man may play Whist for several weeks. He will then find it is necessary for him to apply his knowledge for three or four years before he discovers how difficult a game it is."—*Traité du Whiste, Fragment du Chapitre XV.* And the reason is not far to seek. In order thoroughly to investigate the theory, and to arrive at the principles of Whist, mathematics and careful reasoning have to be employed. The theory, indeed, may now be learnt readily enough from books ; but the practice, to be of the first order, involves a great variety of accomplishments.

To apply the theory of Whist successfully the player must note the peculiarities of partners and of opponents ; that is, he must study human nature. He must use observation, memory, inference, and judgment in such a way as to enable himself to trace appearances to their true origin. He must be by turns cautious and bold. He must exercise watchfulness and tact. He must shrewdly shield himself against deception. He must level well-weighed arguments at every card that falls. And in short, as Dr. Pole well observes, he must bring to bear on the game " such a general course of thought and action as must be dictated by competent and well-trained mental powers."

Deschapelles calls Chess a "single idea," in the sense of simple (*simplex*); Whist may, in a similar sense, be regarded as a compound idea.

Now, as to the variety of Whist and Chess. It is hardly necessary to state that great variety is essential to scientific games, to prevent exhaustion by systematic analysis. Variety is also necessary to popular games, in order to check repetition, and to prevent the interest they excite from flagging. In variety, both Whist and Chess are practically infinite. The possible combinations in both games are, humanly speaking, inexhaustible. Theoretically, the whole progress of a perfect game at Chess is dependent on the move made by the first player. And there being twenty moves open to him, the number of absolutely perfect games that might be played is twenty. But even of these twenty games it cannot be contended that all would be of equal excellence, because some one or two of the original twenty moves ought to be superior to all the others. Practically, Chess is not thus limited, because when the analytical power of one player fails to conduct him to the perfect move, a variation is introduced, on which the opponent has in turn to exert his powers of analysis, and so on. Hence, without seeking to deny that Chess is, for practical purposes, inexhaustible, it is still the fact that the great variety of Chess is not inherent in the game



itself, but is due to imperfections in the analytical skill of the antagonists. As far as the exercise of judgment based on probabilities is concerned, Chess is valueless ; because no Chess player would hazard a move other than the best suggested by his analytical skill, on the chance of the adversary's failing to take advantage of his error. Reduction of variety within narrow bounds is consequently the ultimate limit to which the practice of Chess approaches, in proportion as the analytical skill of the players increases.

Though at Whist hands may be grouped so as to admit the application of certain principles of play to certain sets, no exhaustive demonstration of these principles is possible. No *proof* can be given. The student has frequently to be satisfied if the reasons in favor of a certain line of play appear weighty in themselves, and if none weightier can be suggested in support of a contrary course ; also, he has often to be contented with the assurance that particular methods of play, having stood the test of time, are generally adopted by experienced players. In depth, then, Whist may be said to be immeasurable, which Chess is not. Moreover, the variety of hands on which a Whist player has to exercise his mental powers is not only very considerable, but is entirely independent of his volition. Hence at Whist an indefinite number of perfect games may be played,



in the sense of obtaining the best practicable result, supposing every card played to be the best possible, having regard to calculation and to observation.

The original blindfoldness of the leader at Whist with regard to the position of thirty-eight of the cards, introduces elements of variety in that game altogether different from what is met with at Chess. At Whist there is a constant endeavor on the part of one side to arrive at the maximum result for their hands, by the use of observation, memory, inference, and judgment, their play being dependent from trick to trick on the inferred position of the unknown from observation of the known. There is also a similar constant endeavor on the part of the other side. Here is none of the analytical rigidity which distinguishes Chess. The changeableness of the known elements to which analysis can be applied is one of the special charms of Whist, and it introduces variety of a kind to which there is no parallel in Chess. At Chess, the moves are suggested by the application of analysis based on inspection ; at Whist, the play results from exercise of judgment, based on observation and inference.

The power of the Whist pieces being much more limited and defined than that of the men at Chess, the net analytical result in any given

Whist case is much easier to obtain than in any given Chess case ; so in the matter of duration of interest, Chess must be allowed to take a position above Whist, though it may be questioned whether the prolonged strain requisite to play Chess well does not remove that game altogether out of the category of recreations.

Next, let us measure the social relations of Whist and Chess. Whist is sometimes called an unsocial game, because lookers-on are not allowed to speak. But Chess equally loves "retirement and the mute silence," and there is no interval at Chess, as there is at Whist between the hands, when conversation may be freely indulged in. There is no cutting in and cutting out, and consequently no frequent change of adversaries. Chess, again, only engages two players instead of four. And the fact that Whist is a game of partnership, introduces social elements which are altogether wanting at Chess. Owing to this cause, the practice of Whist tends to fit the players for grappling with the affairs of life. This characteristic of Whist has been noticed by several eminent writers. Bulwer, himself an accomplished Whist player, refers to it in his novel of "Alice." He says—"Fate has cut and shuffled the cards for you; the game is yours unless you revoke ;—pardon my metaphor,—it is a favorite one ;—I have worn it threadbare ;—but life *is* so like a rubber at Whist."

Dr. Pole, in illustration of this point, says:—Whist is “a perfect microcosm—a complete miniature society in itself. Each player has one friend, to whom he is bound by the strongest ties of mutual interest and sympathy; but he has twice the number of enemies against whose machinations he is obliged to keep perpetual guard. He must give strict adherence to the established laws and conventional courtesies of his social circle; he is called upon for candid and ingenuous behavior. He must exercise moderation in prosperity, patience in adversity, hope in doubtful fortune, humility when in error, forbearance to the faults of his friends, self-sacrifice for his allies, equanimity under the success of his adversaries, and general good temper throughout all his transactions. His best efforts will sometimes fail, and fortune will favor his inferiors; but sound principles will triumph in the end. Is there nothing in all this analogous to the social conditions of ordinary life?” And again the same writer remarks—“Does not the proverb represent the clever, successful man as ‘playing his cards well’?”

Sir George Lewis, in “Methods of Observation and Reasoning in Politics,” says:—“We hear of the game of politics, and of moves being made on the political board. Practical politics, however, do not so much resemble a game of Chess

as a game of Whist. In Chess, the position of the pieces at the beginning of the game is precisely similar for both contending parties, and every move is made by the deliberate choice of the players. The result depends, therefore, exclusively on their comparative skill; chance is altogether excluded. In Whist, on the other hand, the distribution of the cards depends upon chance; that is to say, it depends upon circumstances not within the control of any of the players; but, with the cards so casually dealt out, each player plays according to his free choice. The result, therefore, depends partly upon chance, or luck as it is called, and partly upon skill. This is exactly analogous to the state of things in politics. A large number of circumstances upon which the practical politician has to act are beyond his control. They are, like a hand at cards, dealt out to him by a power which he cannot regulate. But he can guide those circumstances which are within his power, and the ultimate result will depend, partly upon the character of the circumstances upon which he has to act, and partly upon the wisdom, skill, and prudence with which he conducts himself in reference to them. If the circumstances are very adverse, the utmost skill may be unavailing to produce a successful result. If they be propitious, he may be successful with a moderate amount of good manage-



ment. If the circumstances should be unfavorable, good management will only meet with checkered success, and will be no effectual security against occasional reverses, though it will be successful in the long-run, and taking together both favorable and unfavorable circumstances."

From these extracts it would seem that Whist possesses higher claims than Chess from a social point of view.

Lastly, as to fitness for the purposes of recreation. In simplicity of construction Whist is peculiarly fortunate. All that is necessary to be known before attempting to play is the order of the cards, and the facts that the highest card wins the trick and that trumps win other suits. Admiral Burney tells the story of a young man who was desirous of learning Whist. On being informed of the construction of the game, he said—"Oh! if that is all, I shall be able to play as well as any one in half an hour." If he had said he could learn the *mise en scène* of the game in a few minutes he would have been right.

Chess, though not a game of extreme complexity, requires more preliminary instruction than Whist. To know the moves is considered by some persons to be an accomplishment, and as regards the amount of "book" requisite to play one or the other game fairly well, Whist is a long way to the front.



Then as to the comparative interest excited by the two games. To arrive at a just estimate on this head we must divide games into three classes :—

1. *Games of chance*, such as rouge-et-noir, roulette, and pitch-and-toss. These are mere vehicles for gambling, and excite scarcely any interest unless played for money.

2. Games into which both skill and chance enter, or *mixed games*, such as whist, piquet, and backgammon. These excite more interest than games of chance.

3. *Games of skill*, such as chess and draughts. These excite too much interest. To play well at Chess is too hard work. The game of Chess—not skittling Chess, but Chess played as it should be—instead of being resorted to as a distraction and a relief from toil, is in the hands of real artists the business of their lives, and, in this sense, it can hardly be regarded as a *game* at all.

It is, then, to mixed games that we must look for the happy medium which excites sufficient but not too great interest. To be candid, it must be admitted that chance enters too largely into Whist to render it a perfect game, owing to the preponderance of honors. Clay observes on this point that Short Whist is “in full vigor, in spite of at least one very glaring defect—the undue value of the honors, which are pure luck, as com-

pared with that of the tricks, which greatly depend on skill. Short Whist bears this mark of its hasty and accidental origin. If the change had been carefully considered, the honors would have been cut in half, as well as the points. Two by honors would have counted one point. Four by honors would have counted two. Had this been so, the game would be perfect, but the advantage of skill would be so great as to limit considerably the number of players." Clay then explains the circumstances of the "hasty and accidental origin" of Short Whist. He continues:—"Some sixty or seventy years back," that would be about the beginning of this century, "Lord Peterborough having one night lost a large sum of money, the friends with whom he was playing proposed to make the game five points instead of ten, in order to give the loser a chance, at a quicker game, of recovering his loss."

It is no secret that the committee appointed in 1863 to revise the laws of Whist had the question of the reduction of honors brought before them; but they feared to make so large an alteration in the game, lest the new laws should only meet with partial adoption.

Nevertheless, Whist, with its imperfectly-balanced complements of skill and chance, goes very near to exciting the proper amount of interest. The entry of chance into Whist diminishes the

labor of playing, and varies the faculties of the mind called into operation. The combinations that ensue afford numerous openings for the employment of skill, and watching the chances keeps the mental powers pleasantly occupied, while the cessation of play between the hands, like the pause between the beats of the heart, obviates the ill-effect of long-continued effort.

The objection sometimes brought against Whist, that it is a card-game, and that therefore it may lead to gambling, does not require serious refutation. Chess may be, and often is, played for money; but it is no discredit to any game that it may be abused instead of being used.

Has it not been shown that Whist, as a game, possesses claims to be ranked above Chess? Has it not been shown that Whist is calculated to promote to the utmost the amusement and relaxation of those employed? The game of Whist may fairly be said to combine the means of innocent recreation, of healthy excitement, and of appropriate mental exercise, and thus to fulfil, in the highest degree, the purposes for which it was designed.

## ON THE MORALITY OF CARD-PLAYING.

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“ A man, no Shoter (not longe agoo) wolde defende playing at Cardes and Dise, if it were honestly used.”

—*Toxophilus*, ROGER ASCHAM.

“ Let Cards, therefore, not be depreciated; an happy invention, which, adapted equally to every capacity, removes the invidious distinctions of nature, bestows on fools the pre-eminence of genius, or reduces wit and wisdom to the level of folly.”

—*History of Great Britain*, HENRY, vol. xii., p. 385.

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IN the previous paper it was argued that games at their best combine the means of innocent recreation, of healthy excitement, and of appropriate mental exercise. A perfect game ought to excite such an amount of interest that it may be played for its own sake, without needing the stimulus of gambling.

The reason cards are regarded as the gamester's stock-in-trade all over the world is, no doubt, that they may readily, and in various ways, be made to minister to the excitement of “ play.” At the same time it must not be forgotten that cards



also minister with equal readiness to the lawful amusement of men. But, inasmuch as cards are frequently made use of as convenient gambling implements, the "devil's books" are associated by many excellent people, who only regard one side of the shield, with all kinds of wickedness. Gambling, with its concomitants, cheating, quarrelling, swearing, and many other vicious habits, have been unsparingly attributed to the card table. This is a mere consequence of association of ideas. The shady doings charged on *cards* should properly be charged on games, whether of cards or not, whose exciting element is a stake, the winning or losing of which depends on *chance*. Cards, properly used, are seductive, but harmless instruments of social relaxation. It is no reason we should refrain from playing with cards because other persons have made a bad use of them. We might as well all become total abstainers because some of our countrymen are in the habit of getting drunk. It may be regarded as an axiom that the unsatisfactory associations connected with card-playing have arisen solely from the abuse of cards, and not from any evil qualities necessarily inherent in them. As M. Merlin remarks (*Origine des Cartes à jouer*, Paris, 1869), "Cards have not created the passion of play; it has been a moral flaw from the most remote antiquity. But cards have assisted in developing this passion, because they

offer it a very manageable and attractive instrument."

The present paper, then, will resolve itself into an examination of the morality of playing at any game for a stake, and not necessarily of playing at card-games for a stake. It will be a convenient method of conducting this examination to begin by quoting various writers who have recorded their opinions on the subject.

St. Cyprian, in a homily of high antiquity on gaming, entitled *De Aleatoribus* (probably not written by St. Cyprian), calls games of hazard the nets of the Devil; and affirms that they were invented at the prompting of the evil spirit. The writer consequently maintains that whosoever plays at such games offers sacrifice to their author, and so commits an act of idolatry. Others have held similar opinions. Daniel Souter, a Flemish clergyman, in a treatise published about the middle of the seventeenth century, maintains that all games of hazard are contrary to every one of the ten commandments!

In the latter part of the sixteenth century was published "A Treatise wherein Dicing, Daūcing, Vaine Plaies or Enterludes, with other idle pastimes, &c., commonly vsed on the Sabbath day, are reprooved by the Authoritie of the Worde of God and auncient writers. Made Dialogue-wise by John Northbrooke. Imprinted at Lon-

don by Thomas Dawson, for George Bishoppe, 1579."

The reverend author is very verbose, and rather declaims than argues against play. In his address to the reader he says—"What is a man now a daies if he knows not fashions and howe to weare his apparell after the best fashion? to keepe Companie, and to become Mummers and Dice plaiers, and to plaie their twentie, fortie, or 100./ at Cardes, Dice, &c., Post, Cente, Gleke or such other games: if he cannot thus do he is called a miser, a wretch, a lobbe, a cloune, and one that knoweth no fellowship nor fashions, and less honestie. And by such kind of Plaies many of them are brought into great Miserie and Penurie."

In the "Invective against Dice-plaie" (and an invective it is very properly named), the arguments, such as they are, amount briefly to this—that though honest men play, the persons make not the play good, but rather it makes them bad. That loss of goods is to be imputed to the play as well as to the men, for if you take away the means there will be no playing, and it is most difficult for a man to restrain the bridle of things desired. Dice were invented by Lucifer, the Prince of Devils, and dice-play leads to blasphemy, robbery, craft, covetousness, deceit, and a list of horrors too long to quote, but embracing nearly every possible crime. To the question whether



it is lawful to play any game for money, the author answers in the negative, because play was not appointed as a means to get money, but only for exercise or recreation; and whoever uses it for gain, abuses and changes the intention; and whatever a man wins at play, being naughtily gotten, is not his own. As for cards, they are almost as bad as dice, but not quite, as wit is more used at cards, and less trust in chance and fortune. Dice-play is the mother, card-play the daughter. They draw, both with one string, all the followers thereof into idleness, loitering, blasphemy, misery, infamy, penury, and confusion, He then quotes St. Cyprian, and agrees with him that cards were invented by the Devil to bring in idolatry among men. For the Kings and coate cards, he says, were in old times the images and idols of false gods. He finally concludes that cards and dice are only fit for brutal and ignorant men.

In 1583 was published "The Anatomie of Abuses, containing A Discoverie or briefe Summarie of such notable Vices and Corruptions as now raigne in many Christian Countreyes of the World; but especially in the Countrey of AILGNA [Anglia, England]. Together with the most fearefull Examples of God's Judgments executed upon the Wicked for the same, as well in Ailgnia of late as in other Places elsewhere. Made Dialogue-

wise by Philip Stubbs." In the person of Philoponus, he remarks—"As for Cards, Dice, Tables, Boules, Tennise and such like, thei are *Furta Officiosa*, a certaine kind of smoothe, deceit-full and sleightie thefte, whereby many a one is spoiled of all that he ever hath, sometimes of his life withall, yea, of bodie and soule for ever: and yet (more is the pitie) these bee the only exercises used in every mans house, al the yere through. But especially in Christmas Time, there is nothing els used but Cardes, Dice, Tables, Maskyng, Mummyng, Bouling, and such like fooleries. And the reason is, thei think thei have a commission and prerogative that tyme to doe what thei list, and to followe what vanitie thei will. But (alas) doe thei thinke that thei are privileged at that tyme to doe evill? the holier the tyme is (if one tyme were holier than another, as it is not) the holier ought their exercises to bee."

Nevertheless, he allows that men may sometimes play at games for recreation, but not for money. Being asked by Spudeus, "Is it not lawfull for one Christian man to plaie with an other at any kinde of Game, or to winne his money, if he can?" he replies, "To plaie at Tables, Cardes, Dice, Boules or the like (though a good Christian man will not so idely and vainely spend his golden daies), one Christian with another, for their private recreations, after some oppression of

studie, to drive awaie fantasies, and suche like, I doubt not but thei may, using it moderately, with intermission, and in the feare of God. But for to plaie for lucre of gaine, and for desire onely of his brother's substance, rather than for any other cause, is at no hande lawfull, or to be suffered. For as it is not lawfull to robbe, steale, and purloine by deceite or sleight, so it is not lawfull to get thy brother's goodes from hym by Cardyng, Dicyng, Tablyng, Boulyng, or any other kind of theft, for these games are no better, nay worsen than open theft, for open theft every man can beware of; but this beyng a craftie, polliticke theft, and commonly doen under pretence of freendship, fewe, or none at all, can beware of it. The Commaudemēt saith, Thou shalt not covet nor desire anything that belongeth to thy neighbour. Now, it is manifest that those that plaie for money, not onely covet their brother's money, but also use craft, falsehood, and deceite to winne the same."

At the end of the sixteenth century, James Balmford, a Puritanical clergyman, or as he would now be called, a Low Churchman, published a pamphlet of sixteen pages, called "A short and plain Dialogue concerning the Unlawfulness of playing at Cards or Tables," 1593, dedicated to "Master Lionel Maddison, Maior, the Aldermen his brethern, and the godly Burgesses of New-

castle-upon-Tine." The characters introduced by the author are a Professor and a Preacher. It appears that the Professor had read, in the "Common-places" of Peter Martyr, a statement that dice-playing is unlawful, because it depends on chance. But as he was not convinced by this that playing at "tables," *i.e.* backgammon, tric-trac, etc., is unlawful (skill being then introduced), he craves the Preacher's opinion concerning the lawfulness of tables and cards. The Preacher, who, we may presume, represents the author's view, strongly objects to these games on moral grounds, and determines that all such games are unlawful in the following words:—"Lots are not to be used in Sport; but Games, consisting in Chance, as Dice, Cards, are Lots; therefore, not to be used in Sport." He then refers to Joshua xviii. 10; 1 Samuel xiv. 41; Jonah i. 7; Malachi i. 6, 7; and Hebrews vi. 16, in confirmation of his view. Joshua xviii., however, hardly supports the Preacher's doctrine, as there lots are cast "before the Lord," *i.e.* with the sanction of the Most High, to determine the division of the land of several of the tribes. The Preacher gets out of this difficulty by admitting that Lots are sanctified to a peculiar use, *viz.*, to end controversies, by which he probably means to prevent quarrelling. But he carefully omits any reference to the casting of lots for the sacrifice (Lev. xvi. 8), where



the plea of ending controversies will not help him.

Finally, the Preacher condemns all games which depend on chance ; and he further refuses to countenance games at all, even if played for amusement only ; for, even granting that such games are lawful, he is of opinion that the desire of gain would soon creep in, according to the common saying, "*Sine lucro friget ludus.*"

A little later, 1610, William Ames, fellow of Christ's College, preached at St. Mary's against cards and dice, as being forbidden by Scripture ; but his sermon gave much offence, and he was obliged to withdraw from the University to avoid expulsion.

Gisbert Voet also supported Balmford and Ames.

As at this time party feeling ran strong between the Puritans and the High Churchmen, the views of the former could not be passed over in silence. Accordingly in 1619 the learned Thomas Gataker published his well-known treatise "On the Nature and Use of Lots," in which he combats the opinions of Balmford and others. He classes Lots under three heads:—1. Lots which are commonly employed in serious affairs ; 2. Lots which enter into games of chance ; and 3. Lots extraordinary or divinatory.

Gataker considers Lots of the first kind to be

innocent. The third class he condemns, except they are expressly required to be used by a revelation or Divine command. As to Lots which enter into games, with which we are principally concerned in this paper, Gataker thinks they were neither prohibited by the Scriptures nor evil in themselves. He candidly admits that they are liable to great abuse; but, while he earnestly deprecates such abuse, he argues forcibly that it is not a necessary consequence of the employment of Lots in games played for amusement.

The controversy thus started raged for some time, both sides retaining their own views. A summary of the whole affair is given in the preface to the second edition of "*Traité du Jeu, où l'on examine les principales Questions de Droit naturel et de Morale, qui ont du Rapport à cette Matière. Par Jean Barbeyrac, Professeur en Droit à Groningue,*" 1738. The first edition was published in 1710. It is said that Barbeyrac was induced to write the work in consequence of being frequently appealed to by ladies who came to play cards with his mother-in-law, with whom he resided.

In his preface, Barbeyrac says:—"I am not surprised that Gataker should have been violently opposed when he maintained the lawfulness of lots, considering the date at which he wrote. It, however, appears strange to me that, in an age when so many philosophical and theological pre-



judices have been shaken off, people can still be found, who, regarding only the abuse which may arise out of the use of things which are harmless in themselves, condemn them as absolute evils, on frivolous or extremely doubtful grounds. Such condemnation is more likely to confirm abuse than to correct it \* \* \* for, a favorite passion is apt to acquire fresh vigor if a pretext for its indulgence is discovered in the weakness of the arguments with which it is assailed. \* \* I greatly doubt whether a gamester was ever deterred from play by arguments brought forward to persuade him that his practices contravene the ordinances of Divine Providence."

The following is a short analysis of Barbeyrac's "solid reasons" for approving of play:—Man was not sent into the world by the Creator to pass his time in eating, drinking, and merry-making, but to be employed in matters of utility and serious consideration. He has no right to waste his mental powers by remaining idle, nor in perpetual rounds of dissipation and amusement. He is bound to do some kind of work or other; and even if he has the means of living without labor, he still ought to find some creditable employment, to render himself a useful member of society.

Man, however, was not created to labor incessantly without relaxation. The human machine soon gets out of order if worked too hard. The

ancients said, "Take recreation in order to make progress with work," and "Rest is the seasoning of labor." The day and night mark out hours of labor and repose, and teach us that each is equally indispensable. Morality and Religion require us to take innocent pleasures; and it is unjust to condemn those who do so discreetly.

But there are people who fancy that use and abuse are inseparable; and, forming mystical notions of virtue and piety, would have us reject all kinds of diversion, as being unworthy of reasoning creatures. Such persons aspire to a state of perfection unattainable by human nature. I maintain, then, we may indulge in amusements that are themselves free from vice. If a person finds pleasure in playing at billiards, chess, cards, backgammon, or even with dice, why may he not amuse himself with them as well as in promenading, with music, in the chase, in fishing, in drawing, and in a thousand similar ways?

The question then remains, Is the game to be for nothing or for a stake of some value? If there is no stake there can be no semblance of criminality; and, if there is a stake, I do not see any evil, if we look at the matter in a proper light.

Barbeyrac's arguments are so far good. But when he comes to the conclusion that games are not immoral whether the stakes are large or small,

he takes a view which is indefensible. He continues thus:—If I am at liberty to promise and give my property to whomsoever I choose, why may I not promise and give a certain sum in the event of another person proving more fortunate or more skilful than I am, with respect to the result of certain combinations previously agreed on? Why may not this person avail himself of skill or fortune on an issue about which we voluntarily contract an obligation? Every person is at liberty to cede property to another, the cession being dependent on fortuitous circumstances. Hence a person may fairly win if he himself risks the loss of as much as he can gain on the event. In fact, play is a kind of contract; and in every contract the will of the parties is the supreme law.

Barbeyrac is here in error. Persons are restrained by law (which may be taken to represent the moral sense of the community), from ceding their property to others except for a consideration. People who enter into contracts that are contrary to the usages of society, or which are opposed to the laws of the country in which they reside, are not compelled to fulfil these contracts. If the loser of a wager refuses to pay his losses, the law will not assist the winner to enforce payment. And very properly so; for to hold the loser to the original bargain would, as a

rule, inflict a greater injury on society than allowing him to repudiate it.

Barbeyrac's work has been introduced out of its chronological order, as it completes the controversy on the nature and use of lots.

We now go back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. In 1615, a curious Rabbinical tract on gaming, called "*Sûr Mera*" (Depart from Evil), was printed at Venice. The name of the author is not known. It is in the form of a dialogue between two young Jews—Medad, who maintains the lawfulness of gaming, and Eldad, who is opposed to "play."

Medad says that "play" is commendable, for it causes men to forget the cares of daily life. In commerce, things pass from one to another by way of barter or sale, and why should not "play" be estimated the same as any other business, at which money is sometimes lost and sometimes gained?

Eldad answers that traffic, or commerce, is productive of benefit to both the buyer and seller, on which Medad observes that merchants will buy and lock up corn or wine, and then look to Heaven for the signs of bad weather, and rejoice at the storm which destroys the vintage and crops of the year, because the holder will thus be enriched. He asks triumphantly, Is there any mutual benefit in this, when one man's profit depends on the injury of the rest of the world?



Eldad replies that this is not fair trade; it is mere speculation, which is in fact gambling.

In the remainder of the tract, Eldad endeavors to show that a gamester breaks all the ten commandments, and that, according to the Talmud, he can neither be a judge nor a witness. Medad answers, and cites opposite passages. Then they recite poetry, in which the miseries and the pleasures of a gamester's life are set forth by each; and finally, of course, Medad yields, and admits that the cause he had maintained is bad.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, Jeremy Taylor published his opinions on "play." In the words of Archdeacon Butler, Taylor was "one of the most truly pious and most profoundly learned prelates that ever adorned any age or country; nor," adds the Archdeacon, "do I think that the most rigid of our disciplinarians can produce the authority of a wiser or a better man."

On the "Question on Gaming, Whether or no the making and providing such instruments which usually minister to it, is by interpretation such an aid to the sin as to involve us in the guilt?" the Bishop writes as follows:—

"Many fierce declamations from ancient sanctity have been uttered against cards and dice by reason of the craft used in the game, and the consequent evils, as invented by the Devil. And, indeed, this is almost the whole state of the ques-

tion, for there are so many evils in the use of these sports; they are made trades of fraud and livelihood; they are accompanied so with drinking and swearing; they are so scandalous by blasphemies and quarrels; so infamous by misspending precious time, and the ruin of many families; they so often make wise men fools and slaves of passion, that we may say of those who use them inordinately that they are in an ocean of mischief, and can hardly swim to shore without perishing. But that cards are themselves lawful, I do not know any reason to doubt. He can never be suspected in any criminal sense to tempt Divine Providence, who by contingent things recreates his labor, and, having acquired his refreshment, hath no other end to serve; and no desires to engage the Divine Providence to any other purpose.

\* \* \* A man may innocently, and to good purposes go to a tavern; but they who frequent them have no excuse unless their innocent business does frequently engage, and their severe Religion bring them off safely. And so it is in these sports; there is only one cause of using them, and that comes but seldom, the refreshment, I mean, of myself or my friend, to which I minister in justice or in charity. But when our sports come to that excess, that we long and seek for opportunities; when we tempt others, are weary of our business and not weary of our game; when we



sit up till midnight, and spend half-days, and that often too; then we have spoiled the sport—it is not a recreation but a sin. \* \* \* He that means to make his games lawful must not play for money, but for refreshment. This, though few may believe, yet is the most considerable thing to be amended in the games of civil and sober persons. For the gaining of money can have no influence in the game to make it the more recreative, unless covetousness holds the box. \* \* \* But when money is at stake, either the sum is trifling, or it is considerable. If trifling it can be of no purpose, unless to serve the ends of some little hospitable entertainment or love-feast, and then there is nothing amiss; but if considerable, a wide door is opened to temptation, and a man cannot be indifferent to win or lose a great sum of money, though he can easily pretend it. If a man be willing or indifferent to lose his own money, and not at all desirous to get another's, to what purpose is it that he plays for it? If he be not indifferent, then he is covetous, or he is a fool; he covets what is not his own, or unreasonably ventures that which is. If without the money he cannot mind his game, then the game is no divertisement, no recreation; but the money is all the sport, and therefore covetousness is all the design. But if he can be recreated by the game alone, the money does not change it from

lawful to unlawful, and the man from being weary to become covetous; and, from the trouble of labor or study, remove him to the worse trouble of fear, or anger, or impatient desires. Here begins the mischief; here men begin, for the money, to use vile arts; here cards and dice begin to be diabolical, when players are witty to defraud and undo one another; when estates are ventured and families are made sad and poor by a luckless chance. And what sport is it to me to lose my money, if it be at all valuable? and if it be not, what is it to my game? But sure, the pleasure is in winning the money; that certainly is it. But they who make a pastime of a neighbor's ruin, are the worst of men, said the comedy. But concerning the loss of our money, let a man pretend what he will, that he plays for no more than he is willing to lose, it is certain that we ought not to believe him; for if that sum is so indifferent to him, why is he not easy to be tempted to give such a sum to the poor? Whenever this is the case, he sins that games for money beyond an inconsiderable sum. Let the games be nothing, or almost nothing, and the cards or dice are innocent, and the game as innocent as push-pin. \* \* \* In plays and games, as in other entertainments, we must neither do evil, nor seem to do evil; we must not converse with evil persons, nor use our liberty to a brother's prejudice or grief. We must not do

anything which he, with probability, or with innocent weakness, thinks to be amiss, until he is rightly instructed; but, where nothing of these things intervene, and nothing of the former evils is appendant, we may use our liberty with reason and sobriety; and then, if this liberty can be so used, and such recreations can be innocent, as they assuredly may, there is no further question but those trades which minister to these divertisements are innocent and lawful."

The whole of this passage is truly admirable; but, if one may venture to criticise so eminent a writer, two objections may be made to it. The one is that there is a use in a stake, independently of winning or losing it, as will appear hereafter; the other is, that the Bishop fails to perceive the distinction between the amount risked on each game, and the expectation (as it is termed in mathematics) of gain or loss on a series of games. Most people who play cards at all can afford to play sixpenny points at whist; but it does not follow that they could afford to give half-a-crown to the poor at the conclusion of every rubber (about the average result), whether they won or lost it. The player expects to win some rubbers and to lose others; and at the end of a considerable number of rubbers played, say during a twelvemonth, he expects to be in or out of pocket at most a few pounds, which he can well afford, if he loses, to

pay for his amusement. If he wins, and has any conscientious scruples about the lawfulness of retaining money won at play (Luther was of opinion that it might be lawfully retained), he may, like Parson Dale in "My Novel," treat himself to the additional gratification of distributing it in charity.

St. Francis de Sales, according to the "*Mémoires sur la Cour de Louis XIV et de la Régence*," (Paris, 1823,) went so far as to cheat at cards, and excused himself for so doing, by saying that whatever he won was for the poor! When the Archbishop of Aix learnt that St. Francis was about to be canonised, he said he was delighted to hear of his good fortune, "*quoiqu'il il trichât au piquet.*" '*Mais, Monseigneur,*' lui dit-on '*est-il possible qu'un Saint friponne au jeu ?*' '*Ho,*' repliqua l'Archevêque, '*il disait, pour ses raisons, que ce qu'il gagnait était pour les pauvres.*'" St. Francis does not appear to have been very particular nor very consistent; for later in life he condemned all games at cards as being "simply and naturally bad and reprehensible."

John Locke, in his Treatise on "Education," 1693, says—"As to cards and dice, I think the safest and best way is never to learn any play upon them, and so to be incapacitated for those dangerous temptations and incroaching wasters of useful time."



Robert Nelson, a learned and pious English gentleman, author of "A Companion for the Fasts and Festivals of the Church of England," and of the "Practice of True Devotion," 1708, says in the latter work, "Sober persons do not make a business of what they should use as a diversion." Hence he considers there is no objection to cards played for amusement.

Addison, however, about the same time (1711), in No. 93 of the *Spectator*, on "Proper Methods of Employing Time," held the opposite view. He says, "I must confess I think it is below reasonable creatures to be altogether conversant in such diversions as are merely innocent, and have nothing else to recommend them, but that there is no hurt in them. Whether any kind of gaming has even this much to say for itself, I shall not determine; but I think it very wonderful to see persons of the best sense passing away a dozen hours together in shuffling and dividing a pack of cards, with no other conversation but what is made up of a few game phrases, and no other ideas but those of black or red spots ranged together in different figures. Would not a man laugh to hear one of this species complaining that life is short?"

Jeremy Collier, in his "Essay on Gaming," 1713, which takes the form of a dialogue between Dolomedes and Callimachus (the author), ex-

presses his opinions (which are here condensed), as follows :—

Deep play sets the spirits on float, strikes the mind strongly into the face, and discovers a man's weakness very remarkably. You may see the passions come up with the dice, and ebb and flow with the fortune of the game. The sentence for execution is not received with more concern than the unlucky appearance of a cast or a card. Some people are miserably ruffled, and distressed to an agony ; others are no less foolishly pleased, and so bring their covetous humor into view. Why then resign repose of mind and credit of temper to the mercy of chance?

Dolomedes then points out that some people play without the least ruffle, and lose great sums with decency and indifference.

Callimachus replies this is merely a copy of the countenance, things being not so smooth within as without. The anguish is concealed. But if the players are really unconcerned and a heavy blow brings no smart, the case is worse. Such stoicism is the speediest despatch to beggary. It makes the man foolhardy and renew the combat. But it is rarely met with. When misfortune strikes home, the temper generally goes with the money, according to the proverb, "*Qui perd le sien, perd le sens.*" One loss makes people desperate, and leads to another ; the head grows



misty with ill-luck, and the man becomes an easier conquest. When your bubbles are going down the hill, you lend them a push, though their bones are broken at the bottom.

When things, with a promising face, sicken, the spirits of your gaming sparks are up immediately; they are a storm at the first blast, the train takes fire like gunpowder. Then, nothing is more common than oaths and execrable language. Instead of blaming their own rashness, they curse their stars, and rage against their fate, and these paroxysms sometimes run so high, you would think the Devil had seized the organs of speech; and these hideous sallies are sometimes carried on to quarrelling and murder. The hazards of play are frightful; a box and dice are terrible artillery.

In the "Reminiscences" of the Rev. R. Polwhele, 1773, occurs a letter from Augustus Toplady, a clergyman and a high Calvinist, approving of cards and other games, and stating his opinion that the clergy may innocently indulge in various recreations. He says—"I do not think that honest Martin Luther committed sin by playing at Backgammon for an hour or two after dinner, in order, by unbending his mind, to promote digestion.

"I cannot blame the holy martyr, Bishop Ridley, for frequently playing at Tennis before he became a prelate, nor for playing at the more

serious game of Chess twice a day, after he was made a bishop.

“As little do I find fault with another of our most exemplary martyrs, the learned and devout Mr. Archdeacon Philpot, who has left it on record, as a brand on Pelagians of that age, that ‘they looked on honeste pastyme as a sinne;’ and had the impudence to call him an Antinomian and a loose moralist, because he now and then relaxed his bow with ‘huntynge, shootyng, bowlyng, and such like.’

“Nor can I set down pious Bishop Latimer for such an enemy to holiness of life, on account of his saying that hunting is a good exercise for men of rank, and that shooting is as lawful an amusement for persons of inferior class.

“I have not a whit the worse opinion of the eminent and profound Mr. Thomas Gataker, for the Treatise which he professedly wrote to prove the lawfulness of card playing, under due restrictions and limitations.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

“I cannot condemn the Vicar of Broad Hem-bury [*i.e.* himself] for relaxing himself now and then among a few select friends with a rubber of sixpenny Whist, a pool of penny Quadrille, or a few rounds of twopenny Pope-Joan. To my certain knowledge, the said Vicar has been cured of headache by one or other of those games, after

spending eight, ten, or twelve, and sometimes sixteen hours in his study. Nor will he ask any man's leave for so unbending himself,—because another person's conscience is no rule to his, any more than another person's stature or complexion."

Dr. Johnson ("Tour to the Hebrides," 1785) regretted he had not learnt to play at cards, giving as his reason, "It is very useful in life; it generates kindness and consolidates society." This reminds one of Talleyrand's *not* respecting Whist, "Vous ne savez pas donc le Whiste, jeune homme. Quelle triste vieillesse vous vous préparez !"

John Wilson, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, was in favor of card-games, if we may assume that he expresses his own sentiments in the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, 1826. The dialogue on gaming, between himself and the Ettrick Shepherd, may thus be summed up :—

There are families, especially austere Calvinists, who abhor cards, and their principles ought to be respected. Nevertheless, old people, a little dim-eyed or so, might do much worse than while away an occasional evening at an innocent and cheerful game at cards. It is true that cards are not absolutely necessary, but unless people are greedy and play for the pool, there is no objection to them.

Indeed, among the leisured classes, card-playing in moderation is harmless. But as for "Hells" (or gaming houses) they cannot be too severely condemned.

William Andrew Chatto, discussing the morality of card-playing in his "Facts and Speculations on Playing-Cards," 1848, says—"Most persons who play for high stakes, either at games of pure chance, or of chance and skill combined, make more or less a traffic of their amusement; and risk their own money from a desire of winning that of another. In all such cases gaming is a positive evil to society, and is utterly inexcusable, much less justifiable, on any grounds whatever; and all who thus venture large sums may be justly required to show by what right they possess them. When a fool or a knave is thus stripped of a large property, his loss is a matter of small import to society; the true evil is, that so large a portion of national wealth, created by the industry of others, should be at the disposal of such a character, and should be allowed to pass, on such a contract, to another even more worthless than himself. This objection has not been urged in any of the numerous sermons and essays that have been published against gaming; the authors of which generally, instead of showing that society has both the power and the right to correct such abuses, by depriving the offending parties of the means of continuing



them, have contented themselves with declamations on the wickedness of the pursuit, and with vain appeals to the conscience of inveterate gamblers: while they whistle to the deaf adder, they never seem to suspect that it may be easily despatched with a stick."

While some few authorities condemn games of all kinds, the great majority approve of games played in moderation, and even for a small stake, if the chief idea of the players is mental or bodily refreshment. Only one writer is bold enough not to denounce unlimited stakes, and he has already been dealt with.

The great difficulty seems to be this:—If the game in itself is sufficiently interesting to keep the players pleasantly occupied, and to afford materials for innocent and healthy enjoyment, why play for a stake at all?

None of the quoted writers have answered this question. Mr. Richard A. Proctor, in *The Echo* of July 17, 1878, says, "I cannot see the sense of playing for insignificant stakes. It is only when the stakes are large enough to be more than the player can afford that any excitement can be added to the pleasure which a good game like Whist affords in itself. And when once the stakes are allowed to attain such an amount, the play becomes gambling."

Mr. Proctor thinks the reason may be that it is



customary to play for something, and that consequently people must either fall in with the custom or abstain from playing.

This, however, is only a statement of the fact, not an explanation of it. Inasmuch as games are almost invariably played for a stake, and that by persons who have no desire of gain, there must be a reason for the custom.

The explanation appears to be this. The use of a small stake is *to define the interest*. It is not the amount dependent on the family rubber or friendly game at billiards that increases the pleasure of the players; indeed, many people who play Whist for sixpenny points or back themselves for a shilling at billiards would feel very uncomfortable, and have their pleasure diminished if a large sum hung on the result. But there is just the difference between playing for something or for nothing that there is between purpose and no purpose. If we walk or ride we do not go round and round in a circle. We go out if possible with a purpose, to visit some person or place. We have perhaps no particular reason to take one direction rather than another; but we feel more interest in our walk or ride if we have a definite object in view.

Then comes the point, What do you mean by a *small* stake? Where does defining interest end and gambling begin?

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Each individual must decide this for himself. It depends mainly on the means of the players. As long as it is a matter of indifference to those engaged whether they win or lose the amount staked, having regard also to their expectation on a series, so long are they without the pale of gambling. The moment any anxiety is felt as to the fate of the sum depending on the result, the sooner the stakes are reduced the better. It is clear that if half-starved street Arabs toss for coppers they are gambling. It is equally clear that if two well-to-do friends toss which of them shall pay for a split brandy-and-soda, they are not gambling. To pursue this still further; if a clerk earning a hundred a year backs his fancy for the Derby for ten pounds, he is gambling; but if a wealthy owner of race-horses puts the same sum on his favorite two-year-old, he is not gambling. To the one ten pounds is an object; to the other it is a mere trifle.

The good sense of the community generally fixes the stakes at a reasonable sum, in accordance with the view just propounded. Thus, at Whist, the domestic rubber may be played for postage-stamps or for silver three-pennies; in general society, shillings, with perhaps an extra half-crown on the rubber, are common enough; while at the Clubs, where money flows more easily, half-crown or crown points are the ruling prices. At crack

Clubs, where many of the members are men of wealth, higher points are, of course, to be met with.

No doubt there is a temptation to men of moderate income to play high when they have the entrée into circles where money is played for. For example: De Jones is a man of family, and as such a member of the Coronet Club where the usual stakes are twos and tens. But De Jones is a younger son, and his income may be reckoned on three fingers. If De Jones is so fond of a rubber that he must wander into the card-room of the Coronet, he ought to retire from the club and join another club where the points are lower. His position, however, as a tempted man is not peculiar; there are temptations in every path of life as well as at the card-table. There is the temptation to the merchant to trade beyond his capital; to the banker or broker to speculate in various securities; to the man of property to live expensively and beyond his income. But no one will argue hence that commercial pursuits or good investments, or the possession of private means are in themselves evils; properly employed, they are blessings. And thus we return to the point from which we set out, viz., that card-playing in common with almost all occupations and amusements, may be wisely and honestly used, or foolishly and wickedly abused.

## ON THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CARDS AND CARD-GAMES.

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“ Di quelle carte, e di quel mazzo strano,  
L'origine cercando, e il primo arcano.”

—*Il Giuoco delle Carte*, BETTINELLI, Poema, Canto I.

“ Il est impossible de dire, prenant un jeu quelconque, qu'il a été inventé en telle année, par un tel. C'est tantôt l'un et tantôt l'autre qui s'avise ajouter quelques règles à un vieux jeu, d'en changer le nom ; des amis adoptent ; quelques sociétés à la suite, et voilà une invention.”

—*Les Cartes à jouer*, PAUL BOITEAU D'AMBLY.

“ 'Spect I growed.”—*Topsy*, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

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ACCORDING to the best authorities there is no trustworthy evidence of the existence of playing-cards more than five hundred years ago. Some writers have attempted to show that playing-cards were anciently known in India and China, whence they were imported to Europe ; but Merlin and Willshire, the most recent authors on the History of Playing-Cards, are of opinion that



the presence of cards in Europe is due to an original invention, and not to importation.

The theory of the oriental origin of cards rests mainly on the following grounds:—

1. That cards were known among the Arabs, Saracens, or Moors, who introduced them into Europe by way of Spain. Covelluzzo, who wrote about the end of the fifteenth century, is reported by Feliciano Bussi (*Istoria della Città di Viterbo*, History of the City of Viterbo, *Roma*, 1743) to have stated as follows:—"Anno 1379, fu recato in Viterbo el gioco delle Carti, che venne de Seracenia e chiamasi tra loro Naib," that is, "In the year 1379, was brought into Viterbo the game of Cards, which comes from the country of the Saracens, and is with them called *Naib*." The assertion of the Saracenic origin of cards has no value beyond that of the personal opinion of Covelluzzo, or of an opinion prevalent when he wrote. Covelluzzo was not contemporaneous with the date mentioned, for his Chronicle terminates in 1480, a century later than the date he gives. Moreover, Covelluzzo, though followed and quoted by Bussi, was by him regarded as a credulous person.

2. That cards made their way into Europe from India, by means of the Gipsies, who carried cards with them for the purposes of divination



and fortune-telling, and that the Moors obtained cards from the Gipsies.

The answer to this supposition is that the Gipsies (whether they are of Egyptian origin, or whether they sprung from the Suders of Hindustan who migrated at the period of Timur Beg) did not appear in Europe before 1417, when cards had been in use for some time.

3. That cards had their source in Egypt.

Those who adopt this view recognize in Tarots cards the pages of a hieroglyphic book, containing the principles of the mystic philosophy of the Egyptians in a series of symbols and emblematic figures. But modern criticism has shown that this theory, however ingenious, is of too recondite and shadowy a character to admit of satisfactory argument.

4. That cards were invented by the Chinese. The principal evidence in favor of this doctrine is contained in the Chinese dictionary *Ching-tsze-tung*, compiled by Eul-koung, and first published A.D. 1678. It is there stated that the cards now known in China as *Teen-tsze-pae*, or dotted cards, were invented in the reign of Seun-ho, 1120. According to tradition they were devised for the amusement of Seun-ho's numerous concubines.

Even granting that cards had an early and separate birth in the Celestial Empire, Europe no more derived her cards from China, than she did

her gunpowder, printing, and engraving, all of which are considered by some to have been originally Chinese inventions.

5. That cards bear an analogy and relation to Chess, which is of Eastern, probably Hindustani, origin.

These analogies, when examined, are insufficient to establish a common origin. The game of *Tchaturanga* (the four *angas* or members of an army), or *Tchaturaji* (the four *Rajahs* or Kings), which is a kind of Chess, was played by four persons, with four suits of sets of men. The moves were determined by means of dice, thus making the game, as at most card-games, a compound one of chance and skill. But here the analogy ends; and the connection, if any, is rather with Backgammon than with cards.

6. Lastily, that certain Indian cards, and the games played with them, present analogies with European cards and card-games. This is particularly the case with the game of cards known as *Ghendifeh*. The marks of the suits in the cards used, and also the rules of the game, have incontestable relations with those of the *Minchiate* of Florence, and *Ombre* of Spain. *Ghendifeh* is played with a pack of ninety-six cards, of eight suits, containing twelve pieces each. Some of the suits, viz.: those of money and swords, resemble the suits of European cards. In the

division of the Hindustani suits into red and white, we have an analogy with the European red and black. In the Hindustani game there are eight suits and six or three players; in the European game of *Ombre* four suits and three players. There are also said to be other points of similarity between *Minchiate*, *Ombre*, and *Ghen-difeh*.

But, admitting so great a similarity that one game may fairly be assumed to have been derived from the other, the inference might be that the Mohammedans of India imitated, in their game, the game of Europe. For, the peculiarities which link the European to the Indian game existed in the former in the year 1488, when cards had been known in Europe for at least a century; and Europe had but little communication with India until about 1494. It must be admitted that this argument is not conclusive, as occasional intercourse would be sufficient to introduce cards.

M. Merlin, the juror who prepared the report on the playing-cards sent to the Paris Exhibition of 1855, says that "not any historic document, monument, nor quotation from Eastern writers, can be adduced in support of the theory that cards had either an Arabian or Indian origin," and that "an attentive study of the various theories of the Oriental origin of cards will show they have all been the results of imagination, and that the con-

jectures on which they have been based will not bear serious examination."

It is not necessary here to endorse in its entirety such a sweeping conclusion. The arguments *pro* and *con* may be found by those interested in the subject in the books specified at the end of this Essay. Enough has been said to justify us in assuming the great probability of the European origin of cards, and consequently of the games played with them.

Starting then in Europe, the question has to be answered, How, when, and where, in Europe did cards and the games played with them originate? This question has exercised many learned men, and it has never been satisfactorily answered.

The evidence as to the non-existence of playing-cards prior to the middle of the fourteenth century, is of course negative. No allusion to cards is to be found in the M.S. of Hugo von Trymberg (second half of thirteenth and beginning of fourteenth centuries), nor in that of Petrarch (first half of fourteenth century), nor in Chaucer (second half of fourteenth century), though in all these writings gambling games and implements are mentioned.

In the Escorial library there is a manuscript composed by the order of Don Alphonso the Wise, dated 1321, on the rules of chess and dice. It does not contain a word about cards.



To come to positive evidence. The earliest date to which it has been proposed to assign the mention of cards is 1278; but this and all others up to 1375, have been shown by the fierce light of modern criticism either not to refer to cards, or to be interpolations. The earliest direct mention of cards that may be accepted without much demur is that in the Chronicle of Covelluzzo already referred to. The *pfflicht-buch* of Nurnberg (1380-84) is stated by some authorities to contain references to cards. But the earliest date, which has never been disputed, and from which the positive history of playing-cards begins is the one discovered by Père Menestrier in the registers of the *Chambres des Comptes* of Charles VI. of France, the account being that of Charles Poupart, the royal Treasurer. In the account commencing 1st February, 1392, is the following entry:—“*Donné a Jacquemin Gringonneur, peintre, pour trois jeux de cartes à or, et à diverses couleurs, ornés de plusieurs devises, pour porter devers le Seigneur Roi, pour son ébatement LVI sols Parisis.*” That is, “Given to Jacquemin Gringonneur, painter, for three packs of cards in gold and various colours, and ornamented with several devices, to carry before the Lord our King for his amusement, fifty-six sols of Paris.”

The conclusion drawn from this passage, that cards were invented for the use of Charles VI., is



unwarrantable ; and so the sneer of Malkin, that it is no very favorable specimen of our wisdom to have universally adopted an amusement invented for a fool, is bereft of its sting. A careful examination of the wording shows that the payment was for *painting* not for *inventing* cards. The general tenor of the entry, the simplicity with which it is made, the absence of any allusion to novelty in the conception, all point to the conclusion that playing-cards were already known ; and that these cards were executed to special order, with more elaborate gilding and coloring than usual, as would probably be the case with cards intended for the personal use of royalty.

There are seventeen pieces in the National Library, Paris, which are erroneously called the Gringonneur or Charles VI. cards of 1392. They are in reality fine Venetian tarots of the fifteenth century, in the opinion of some judges not earlier than 1425.

After 1392, many and certain references to playing-cards are to be met with. The general conclusion arrived at, subject to modification with the extension of our present knowledge, is, therefore, that playing-cards were known about the middle of the fourteenth century, and that they originated in Europe.

In the opinion of the latest authorities on the subject, there existed, for a considerable period

before the invention of playing-cards, a series of emblematic pictures called *naibis*, the *raison d'être* of which is not known with any certainty, but which are supposed to have been used either for simple amusement and instruction or for the purposes of divination and sortilege. And, it is further supposed, that about the end of the fourteenth century some inventive genius, probably Venetian, selected a certain number of these emblematic *naibis*, and, by adding to them a series of numeral cards converted them into implements by which the excitement of chance and the interest of gain might be added to or might supersede the amusement afforded by the original *naibis*.

There is much conjecture in this theory,—but as it is the latest, and is supported by good authority, it may pass muster until some better explanation is offered.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century it is said that these mixed *naibis* and numerals (called *tarots*) were produced in Italy, Venice (or possibly Florence) being assumed as the city of their first appearance. The pack consisted of seventy-eight cards. Twenty-two were emblematic pieces, some of the original *naibis* being retained, and others of a moral character (bearing directly on the dangers and consequences of gambling) being introduced. Fifty-six were numeral pieces, divided into four suits of fourteen cards each, each suit consisting

of ten pip cards, numbered from one to ten, and of four picture or *coat* cards (afterwards corrupted into *court* cards), viz.:—King, queen, cavalier, and man-servant. From Italy playing-cards spread rapidly through Europe, but with various modifications.

The number of cards in the pack was frequently altered, and ere long the emblematic series was withdrawn altogether, except where it was required for the old Tarots game, which still lingers in some parts of Europe.

The marks of the suits have been the subject of much curious speculation. The received notion about them is that they were originally emblematic, and that they represented symbolically two theologic and two cardinal virtues. The earliest marks were cups, representing Faith; money for Charity; swords for Justice; and clubs for Fortitude.

There are other theories respecting the meaning of the marks of the suits; but it seems not improbable that they meant nothing at all, and were simply chosen from a variety of common objects, as being distinct, well known, and intelligible to all. But whether emblematic or not they were very soon changed when cards passed the Italian border. Each nation, except the Spaniards who retained the old sign, seemed to have its own idea as to the marks it preferred for its cards. The

Germans at a very early period employed hearts, bells, leaves and acorns. About the second quarter of the fifteenth century the French introduced what we choose to call spades, hearts, clubs and diamonds, and these marks were adopted in England.

The meaning of the words spades and clubs, and their application to the symbols to which they correspond, have exercised the ingenuity of many writers; the following explanation seems to be the most probable. The spade symbol is the *grün* or leaf of the German marks, the leaf of the wild plum. In adopting it, the French called it *pique*, as is believed from a fancied resemblance to the head of a pike. When we took it from the French, we renamed it spade, borrowing the French symbol and the Italian name for the suit of swords (*spade*). The English club is remarkably like the German acorn, as any one may see who will compare the acorn on the old German cards with the *trefle* of old French ones. As drawn on modern cards, the symbol has the shape of a trefoil leaf, and hence the French name. Here again the English copied the French symbol, and gave it an Italian name, only Anglicizing it. The name of the Italian suit is *bastoni* (batons or clubs). The Italian symbol is precisely the same in appearance as the club with which Jack the Giant-Killer is armed in children's story books.



The names of the suits in early cards may thus be arranged with regard to their countries:—

ITALIAN	.. Coppe.	Spade.	Bastoni.	Danari.
	Cups.	Swords.	Batons.	Money.
SPANISH	.. Copas.	Espadas.	Bastos.	Oros or Dineros.
GERMAN	.. Herzen.	Grün.	Eicheln.	Schellen.
	Hearts.	Leaves.	Acorns.	Bells.
FRENCH	.. Cœurs.	Piques.	Trefles.	Carreaux.
ENGLISH	.. Hearts.	Spades.	Clubs.	Diamonds.

The precise nature of the earliest games played is not known with any certainty. In the game of *Tarocchi*, according to the oldest accounts, three principal elements may be perceived. 1. The superiority of the emblematic cards to those of other suits. This would naturally suggest itself in consequence of their being picture cards, and therefore more striking to the eye than numerals. They soon acquired a distinctive name, *i trionfi* (cards of triumph, or trumps), or *atutti* (above all, afterwards in French, *atouts*). 2. The winning of one card by another of superior numerical value, or trick-making. 3. Obligation to follow suit and to win the cards previously played, *i.e.*, to take the trick, if able.

In other Tarots games such as *Minchiate*, sequences become a scoring element, *i.e.*, the score is affected by certain combinations of cards held in hand, irrespective of play. This feature, varied indefinitely, afterwards appears in many games of



skill, as in scores for point, quatorze, and special rewards for certain privileged cards.

When the tarots or emblematic cards were rejected, trumps were determined by making one suit superior to the others. As the cards varied so did the games. In games of pure chance, such as Lansquenet, the results depend simply on the order in which the cards are dealt; and this principle lies at the root of all card-games of chance to the present day.

Later card-games of skill are all based on omission or variation of some of the features already pointed out, with the addition of other insignificant subsidiary ones too numerous to specify. The mode of producing excitement was constantly varied by the introduction of different methods of staking. At first the mode was to make a pool by subscription among the players. Then betting was added, in the form of vying on or backing the hands; and a necessary accompaniment of this was to permit discarding, or changing worthless cards in hand for undealt cards, in hope of increasing the value of the hand betted upon, and also to allow the players to play or pass as they pleased, generally on pain, if they passed, of forfeiting the sum already staked. Then, as a variation, the amount to be won or lost was made indefinite, as at games where points are played for. In short, the greatest ingenuity has been exercised

in order to add to the excitement of play by introducing variety, and sometimes senseless variety. A curious instance of this, with regard to trick-making games, was first pointed out by Dr. Pole. When a new game was invented, the order of the cards seems to have been varied, with the remarkable consequence that in no game where trick-making is a feature does the natural order of the cards prevail. To quote Dr. Pole "On the Philosophy of Games at Cards" (*The Field*, Dec. 20, 1873):—"The natural order of the cards is the king, highest, then the queen, knave, ten, nine, and so on down to the ace, which is naturally the lowest of all; but oddly enough, there is not, so far as we recollect, a single game where cards compete with each other in trick-making, in which this natural order is preserved. In whist, as we know, the lowest card for playing is put in the highest position, while for cutting it remains the lowest. In piquet it is highest both for cutting and playing. In écarté the ace is put between the knave and the ten. In bezique and sixty-six the ten ranks between the ace and the king. In put and calabrasella the three is the best card; in euchre the knave is best in trumps, the ace in other suits; while in spoil-five the rank and order of the different cards in black and red suits, and in trump and plain suits, is absurdly complex, the five being the best trump, then the ace of hearts

whatever suit is trumps, and so on. Now the philosophy of this feature is well worth study. Every reflecting person must be aware that all these distinctions are mere shams; the playing of the games would be precisely the same without the changes in the rank of the cards; but these changes are so firmly rooted in the constitution of the several games, that it would be impossible to eradicate them. Suppose, for example, that Mr. Clay, when writing his work on whist, had begun by saying that it was a puerile absurdity to make the lowest card capture the highest, and had proposed to revert to the natural rank of the cards, basing all his directions and illustrations on that plan. He would have had reason on his side; but he would simply have been treated by the whist world as a madman, and his book would have shared the fate of De La Rue's memorable attempt to make the kings, queens, and knaves look like reasonable figures—it would have been ignominiously banished from all decent whist society. What is the explanation of this?"

Assuming that the original game of all was the *Tarocchi* of Venice, played with seventy-eight cards (fifty-six numerals and twenty-two tarots), the first alteration was probably made by the Florentines, who increased the emblematic pieces to forty-one, and invented the game of *Minchiate* with ninety-seven cards. After this all the changes

in the pack were in the direction of reduction, it being probably found that packs consisting of so many cards were awkward to handle. Accordingly, a little later, the Bolognese diminished the pack to sixty-two (twenty-two tarots and forty numerals), the two, three, four and five of each suit being rejected. The game played with these cards was called *Tarocchino*. And the Venetians themselves, at a very early period, abolished all the true tarots and suppressed the three, four, five and six of each suit (the pack now consisting of forty cards), and termed the game played with these packs *Trappola*.

When cards travelled through Europe, the tarots cards found comparatively but little favor, though to this day tarots cards may be procured in Italy and in the south of France. *Trappola* cards (*Drapulir Karten*) are also still published at Vienna. But the vast majority of packs soon came to consist of fifty-two numeral cards, one of the four coat cards being removed from each suit. It seems not unlikely that on the loss of one of the pictures the ace was raised to its present rank, instead of the ten, in order to preserve the original number of cards of superior dignity. If so, this accounts for the lowest card ranking as the highest in so many games. At all events, this suggestion is thrown out as a possible answer to Dr. Pole's question.



With these fifty-two cards, some being occasionally suppressed, various countries invented, in the sense explained in the quotation from Paul Boiteau which heads this essay, and established their several games. No nations seemed content to adopt *en bloc* any game as it travelled to them. Though the varieties introduced were marvellously ingenious and numerous, the old fundamental elements were maintained, in most instances so closely that there is no great difficulty in tracing the pedigrees of the principal modern games, owing to their easily recognized family likenesses to older ones.

In order to do this it will be desirable to start with the early games, and to trace their successive developments until the games now in vogue are reached.

In a *Canzone* of Lorenzo de Medici, Flush (*il Frusso*) and Bassett are referred to. The date of the "*Canti Carnascialeschi*" in which the *Canzone* appears is doubtful; but it is among the writer's early compositions. He died in 1492.

It may be assumed from the name *il Frusso*, that a flush (cards of the same suit) was one of the objects, or the principal object striven after by the players. No doubt this game was an early edition of Primero. Baretti's Italian Dictionary (Florence, 1832), under Frusso says, "What we now call Primiera and the English Primero." It



should rather be the Spaniards, for Primero is only the Spanish form of the Italian *Primiera*. At *Primiera* a flush is the most important hand. Primero is undoubtedly a very old game, of either Italian or Spanish origin. It is mentioned by Berni (*Capitolo del Gioco della Primiera*, 1526) with *Bassetta*, *il Frusso*, *Tarocchi*, *Sminchiate*, and other games. Seymour (*Compleat Gamester*, 1734) says Ombre is an improvement of Primero "formerly in great Vogue among the *Spaniards*." But Primero has no relation to Ombre, and it seems more likely that the Spaniards derived Primero from the Italian *Frusso* or *Primiera*, than the reverse. Primero is supposed by some to have been the oldest game played with numeral cards; but it is now pretty well ascertained that *Trappola* was earlier, and so also probably were *Flush* and *Basset*, as the simpler games would naturally precede the more complex ones.

Primero was played in various ways and with packs of different degrees of completeness. Thus in Florence the sevens, eights, and nines were removed from the pack; in Rome they were kept.

The principal features of the game (as nearly as can be made out from old descriptions which are very obscure) were as follows:—Four cards were dealt to each player, and the rest was made or set at the second card. This probably means that, when two cards had been dealt, a pool was formed,

and then the other two cards were dealt. The first player might either stand or pass. If he passed he was at liberty to discard one or two of his cards, and so on with the others.

Any player having a good hand vyed on it, *i.e.*, raised the stakes, and finally the hands were shown. The principal hands were 1 flush, 2 prime, 3 point. The highest flush was the best, then the highest prime (all four cards held being of different suits); and if there was no flush or prime, the highest point won. The point was thus reckoned; seven (best card) counted for 21; six for 18; five for 15; four for 14; three for 13; two for 12; ace for 16; coat cards, 10 each. Also, if agreed, *quinola*, knave of hearts, might be made any card or suit. Another variation, probably of later introduction, was that four cards of a sort, as four sevens, were superior to a flush.

Primero was played also in France. It is included by Rabelais in the list of games that Gargantua played, under the name of *la Prime*. The celebrated history was finished about 1545; but a portion of it was published earlier.

In France, the game of Prime, elaborated, appears to have been played under the name of *l'Ambigu ou le Meslé*. *La Maison des Jeux Académiques* (Paris, 1665) says "*Le Meslé s'appelle tant parce qu'il tient en effet quelque chose de tous les autres, et qu'en le voyant iouer on ne saurait discerner*

*si c'est prime ou autre semblable.*" In later editions of the Academy it is called *l'Ambigu* or the Banquet (literally a banquet of meat and fruit both together—*repas ou l'on sert en même temps la viande et le fruit*), and is stated to be an assemblage of different sorts of games. It was played with forty cards, all the figured cards being thrown out. Two cards were dealt to each player. The players then stood or passed; if the latter, they discarded one or both of their cards, and had others in exchange. The pool was next put down, and two more cards dealt to each player. Each then examined his hand and either stood or passed. Any one that stood might say *va* or go, and increase his stake or go better. If no one else increased the stake to equal the amount already gone, the person who backed his hand took the pool. But if two or more players chose to make *vade*, each of them might discard again or not, and then each that stood might pass or make the *renvi*, that is go better again. If no one stood the *renvi*, the player making it won. If any stood it, they were at liberty to *renvier* once more; and the stakes of those who stood the second *renvi* now being equal, the hands had to be shown. The winner took the pool, the *vade* and the *renvis*, and in addition certain payments from each of the other players, whether they stood the game or not. The *fredon*, four cards of the same denomination, was

the best hand, next *flush-sequence*, (four cards of the same suit in sequence), next *tricon* (three cards of the same denomination), combined with *prime* (four cards of different suits), then *flush*, *tricon*, *sequence*, *prime*, and lastly *point*. Point was two or three cards of the same suit, the highest point being that which contained the most pips.

Primero was also played in England. Shakespeare represents the King (Henry VIII., act v. sc. i) as playing Primero with the Duke of Suffolk, and the game was fashionable in the time of Elizabeth. In J. Florio's *Second Frutes* (1591) the following description of Primero occurs:—"S.—Goe to, let us play at Primero then. \* \* \* A.—Let us agree of our Game. What shall we plaie for? S.—One shilling stake and three rest. A.—Agreede, goe to, discarde. S.—I vye it; will you hould it? A.—Yea, sir, I hould it and revye it; but dispatch. S.—Faire and softly, I praie you. 'Tis a great matter. I cannot have a chiefe carde. A.—And I have none but coate cardes. S.—Will you put it to me? A.—You bid me to losse. S.—Will you swigg? A.—'Tis the least part of my thought. S.—Let my rest goe then, if you please. A.—I hould it. What is your rest? S.—Three crownes and one third, showe. What are you? A.—I am four and fiftie; and you? S.—Oh! filthie luck; I have lost it one ace."

The word "revye" here gives a clue to the ety-



mology of the word "vie." Some modern dictionaries say it is of uncertain etymology, and suggest the German *wagen*, to wager. Bailey gives "Revy, *renvier*, F." Revye is evidently the French *renvi* used at the game of *Ambigu*. Why should not "vye" be the same word adapted to the English language, by omitting the duplicating syllable?

Later than the sixteenth century, a bastard kind of Primero, called Post and Pair, was much played in the West of England. A pack of fifty-two cards was used. When Cotton wrote (*Compleat Gamester*, 1674) he described the game as under:—"This play depends much upon daring; so that some may win very considerably, who have the boldness to adventure much upon the Vye, although their cards are very indifferent."

"You must first stake at Post, then at Pair; after this deal two cards apiece, then stake at the Seat, and then deal the third Card about. The eldest hand may pass and come in again if any of the Gamesters vye it."

Post would appear to have been the point, the best cards being two tens and an ace, counting one-and-twenty. A pair royal (three of a kind) beat everything else, and "wins all, both Post, Pair and Seat." What seat is, Cotton does not explain. It seems to have been a third stake won by the player who held the best card out of



those last dealt, as was the case at the sister game of Brag.

Vying continued until all your antagonists were daunted and brought to submission. But "If all the Gamesters keep in till all have done, and by consent shew their Cards, the best Cards carry the game. Now according to agreement those that keep in till last may divide the stakes, or show the best Card for it."

The more modern game of Brag is evidently Post and Pair with variations. It was played at least as early as Hoyle's time, for Hoyle wrote "A short Treatise of the Game of Brag" in 1751. It was played with fifty-two cards. The players laid down three stakes apiece, one for the best whist card turned up in the deal (this is probably the "seat" of the older game); a second for the best brag hand (pair); and a third for obtaining thirty-one, or the number nearest to it (post). Three cards were dealt to each player, the last one all round being turned up, to decide the first stake. The next stake was won by the best brag hand, or by the boldest player in backing his hand. Two cards, viz., knave of clubs and nine of diamonds (according to Hoyle three braggers), were made favorite cards, and were entitled to rank as any card, like the *quinola* at Primero, natural pairs or natural pairs royal, however, taking precedence of artificial ones. Any player saying

"I brag," and increasing his stake, won, if no one answered with a similar or larger deposit. If any one answered, the bragging continued as at Post and Pair, till one would brag no more or made the stakes equal and called a show. After Hoyle's date, flush-sequences, flushes, and sequences were added to the hands that might win in bragging.

For the third stake the players could draw cards from the stock to increase the point; but any one over-drawing lost his chance.

It only remains to observe that the game of Poker, originally played in America with fifty-two cards, may be described as developed Brag. The stakes for highest card and point are omitted, and the whole game consists in bragging or "going better" on the hands dealt or taken after discarding. Each player has five cards, and some winning combinations of cards are adopted from Ambigu, Primero, or Brag. The winning hands are as follows in order:—straight flush (a flush combined with a sequence), fours (four cards of a kind with one outside card), fulls (three cards of one denomination and a pair), flush (five cards of the same suit not in sequence), straight (a sequence not all of the same suit), triplets (three cards of the same denomination, the other two cards not being a pair), two pairs, one pair, and highest card. It has quite recently been the fashion to play with

a pack of thirty-two cards, the cards from the deuce to the six (both inclusive) being thrown out.

It is curious that the game of Poker, by many considered a new game, should be traceable to a game at least four hundred years old.

Thus, Flush becomes Primera, Primero, or Prime. Prime is modified into Ambigu. The offshoots of the last are Post and Pair and Brag. And lastly, "throwing back" more nearly in some respects to the parent games, Poker, now a national game in America, is invented.

In Germany the game of Lansquenet, under the name of *Landsknechtspiel*, played with fifty-two cards, was a favorite, and by some authorities is called the national German card-game. It is said by Bettinelli, in the notes to the second canto of the poem already quoted, to have been a kind of Bassett or Faro (both very ancient) under another name. All these are mere games of chance, with an advantage to the dealer or holder of the bank. Of games of chance Lansquenet is about the simplest, depending only on whether a card of one denomination is turned up before a card of another denomination. It is, in fact, hardly a game at all, but merely a complicated way of playing pitch-and-toss with cards instead of coins; and this remark applies to every chance game from Bassett to *Rouge-et-noir*. In Germany, Lansque-

net seems to have been the most usual pitch-and-toss card-game; but to elevate it to the dignity of a national card-game, is to treat it with a respect it does not deserve.

Spain is credited with the invention of several games. Her claim to the invention of *Primero* has already been noticed; but preference has been given to the view that *Primero* is only the Spanish rendering of the Italian *Primiera*. *La Gana pierde* was an early and popular game, and is no doubt the same game as *Coquimburt* (evidently a corruption of *qui gagne perd*), mentioned in the Gargantua list. In France a very similar, if not the same, game was called *Reversis*, just as there *Primero*, with a difference, was rechristened *Ambigu*. In the *Académie des Jeux* it is said that *Reversis* was originally Spanish, and that it was called *Reversis* because (in some respects) it was the reverse of all other games. If played in England it might have been under another name; Cotgrave says that a card-game called *Loosing-lodam* (formerly played in England) was very similar to *Reversis*, and Urquhart translates the *Coquimburt* of Rabelais by "losing load him," probably a misprint for *Losing-lodam*. Modern Hoyles (including additional games not written by Hoyle) contain *Reversis*; but no one ever seems to play at it.

*Reversis* was played with forty-eight cards, the



tens being thrown out from a complete pack. Many old Spanish packs contain no tens; and comparing this fact with those previously stated, the conclusion seems irresistible that *La Gana pierde*, alias *Coquimbert*, alias *Reversis*, was the game for which they were intended.

The national game of Spain was and is *Ombre*. It is played by three persons with forty cards, the tens, nines, and eights being discarded. It is a very complicated game, and, on that account alone, one would suppose it must have had a simpler predecessor. But none of the writers on the subject have discovered any similar earlier and less complex game. It introduces an entirely new feature, viz.: that of playing with a partner or ally, instead of, as in the older games, every man's hand (in two senses) being against every one else's.

Ombre is a game of great merit, and was much played at one time in France and England. Modifications of it also were invented, viz.: *Ombre à deux*, *Tredille*, *Quadrille* (four players), *Quintille*, (five players), *Sextille* (six players), and *Médiateur* or *Préférence*, which again has variations such as *Solitaire* and *Piquemedrille*. *Tresillio* and *Rocambor*, much played in Spanish South America, are simply Ombre except in the mode of marking.

The invention of Piquet is generally attributed to France. It is called by Rabelais both *le Piquet*



and *le Cent*; and the same game under the name of *Cientos* was known very early in Spain.

There is yet another possible derivation of Piquet, viz., from a German source. Speaking of German cards, Merlin says, "For figures we meet kings, superior and inferior valets. \* \* \* The pip cards are ten, nine, eight, seven, six and two, a composition resembling our own Piquet, in which the ace has been displaced by the two. This structure is \* \* that of the Saxon game *Schwerter Karte*—*cartes à l'épée*. What appears to confirm our conjecture as to the analogy of Piquet with this *jeu à l'épée* is the fact that in the modern cards, manufactured at Vienna, for playing the German game \* \* \* the six is suppressed as it is in the French piquet-cards since the end of the seventeenth century."

It is possible, too, that this may furnish a clue to the etymology of Piquet, a point much disputed. The sword of the Italian and Spanish cards is equivalent to the pique or spade of the French cards. What more likely than that *Piquet* is the French name of the *Schwerter* or Sword-game? It has often been suspected that Piquet is in some way connected with pique, but for what reason has never been clearly made out. Piquet, under the name of *Sant*, a corruption of *Cent*, was played in England until nearly the middle of the seventeenth century, when the French name of

Piquet was adopted, contemporaneously with the marriage of Charles I. to a French Princess.

It is, further, not unlikely that Piquet is a developed form of *Ronfa*, a game included in Berni's list. This is in all probability the same game as *la Ronfle* included in Rabelais' list. If these have no connection with Piquet, it is at least a remarkable coincidence that the point at Piquet (one of the most important features in the game) was anciently called *ronfle*.

Whether or not the French national game was a development of the German Sword-game, or of *Ronfa* and *Cientos*, it certainly, under the name of Piquet, became identified with France. Prior to the end of the seventeenth century the game of *Cientos*, *Cent*, *Sant* or Piquet was played with a pack of thirty-six cards, the twos, threes, fours and fives being left out; the sixes were then also withdrawn, and only thirty-two cards used, as at present.

Écarté may also be regarded as a game especially French. As now played it is of quite recent invention; but its earlier forms may be traced back to the time of Berni. He includes in his list *Trionfi*, which may be assumed to be the game called *Trionfo* in Spain (mentioned by Vives, a Spaniard, d. 1541, in his "Dialogues" under the name of *Triumphus Hispanicus*). There can be

little doubt but that these games are closely related to *la Triomphe* of Rabelais.

*Triomphe* was played in several ways, either *tête-à-tête*, or with partners, or as a round game. A piquet-pack was used, the ace ranking between the knave and ten. Five cards were dealt to each player, by two and by three at a time, and the top card of the stock was turned up for trumps. The players were obliged to win the trick if able. The player or side that won three tricks marked one point; the winners of the *vole*, two points. The game was usually five up. If one side or player was not satisfied they might offer the point to the adversary. If he refused he was bound to win the *vole* or to have two scored against him.

The same game was played in England, and is described by Cotton under the name of French-Ruff. It appears from Cotton that the players might discard (though the passage is rather obscure), and offering the point is absent from his account of the game.

The family likeness of *Triomphe* or French-Ruff to *Écarté* scarcely needs pointing out. The main difference is the addition of a score for the king at *Écarté*.

The French settlers in America took *Triomphe* with them, and transformed it into Euchre, now a national game in the States.

The game of *Triomphe* or French-Ruff must not

be confused with the English game of Trump or Ruff-and-Honors, the predecessor of our national game of Whist. Cotton clearly distinguishes between the two, calling *Triomphe*, French-Ruff (ruff and trump being synonymous), and Trump, *English*-Ruff-and-Honors.

Trump seems to have been entirely of English origin; at least no mention of it occurs in continental books on games, the nearest approach to it being *les Honneurs* mentioned by Rabelais. Trump was played in England as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century. The game of Ruff-and-Honors, by some called Slam, was probably the same game, or, if not, a similar game with the addition of a score for honors. It was played by four persons, with fifty-two cards, twelve cards being dealt to each and four left in the stock, the top card of which was turned up for trumps. The holder of the ace of trumps *ruffed*, i.e., he put out four cards and took in the stock. The game was nine up, and, at the point of eight, honors could be called as at long Whist.

The game, with a slight modification, was afterwards called Whisk or Whist. In Taylor's "Motto" (1621), Whist is one of the games enumerated. This is the earliest known mention of the game in print, and it is to be observed that it is spelt Whisk, not Whist. Cotton spells it both ways



(see p. 82). In the *Compleat Gamester*, 1674, he says that "Whist is a game not much differing from this [*i.e.*, Ruff-and-Honors], only they put out the Deuces and take in no stock." The trump was the bottom card, and the game was nine up. Whist, then, was originally played with forty-eight cards, and the *odd-trick*, that important feature in the modern game, was, of course, wanting.

Not long after this the game was made ten up. Cotton, ed. 1709, says the points were "nine in all;" ed. 1721, "ten in all;" ed. 1725, "nine in all;" Seymour, ed. 1734, with which Cotton was incorporated, "ten in all;" and it may be assumed that, simultaneously with this change, the practice of playing with fifty-two cards obtained. While Whist was undergoing these changes, it was occasionally played with *swabbers* or *swobbers*, certain cards (not the honors) which entitled the holder to a stake independently of the general event of the game.

After the *swabbers* were dropped, our national card-game having been known as Trump, Ruff-and-Honors, Slam, Whisk, and Whist-and-Swabbers, finally became WHIST. Whist it was when EDMOND HOYLE wrote (A SHORT TREATISE On the GAME of WHIST. By a GENTLEMAN, 1742), and Whist it has since remained. The only alterations that have been made are the reduction



of the game from ten up to five up, the introduction of the treble game, and the abolition of calling honors. The Laws were also revised in 1864. And lastly, since about 1730, when a party of gentlemen used to frequent the Crown Coffee House, in Bedford Row (where they studied Whist, and laid down the following rules: "Lead from the strong suit; study your partner's hand; and attend to the score"), the game has been greatly elaborated as regards scientific play. So far has this been carried that now, as Clay well remarks, "Whist is a language, and every card played an intelligible sentence."

Whist, a game (so far as is known) of purely English invention, is now the King of Card-Games, and seems destined, for many a long year, to retain that distinction.

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# ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF "WHIST," AND OF OTHER WORDS USED IN CONNEXION WITH IT.

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"Etymology has been so unsuccessful in establishing clear and definite principles, or so unfortunate in their application, that many persons regard it as bearing the same relation to grammar as astrology does to astronomy, alchemy to chemistry, or perpetual motion to mechanics."—WELSFORD.

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THE word "Whist," or more properly "Whisk," is of modern coinage. It does not occur in Shakespeare, nor, so far as is known, in any books until late in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. This statement has frequently been printed, and as it has never been controverted, its correctness may be assumed.

The original form of the word in print was WHISK. It occurs, thus spelt, in "Taylor's Motto," by Taylor, the Water-Poet, published in 1621, and this is believed to be its first appearance in print. Speaking of the prodigal, Taylor says:—



“He flings his money free with carelesnesse.  
At novum, mumchance, mischance (chuse ye which),  
At one and thirty, or at poore and rich,  
Ruffe, slam, trump, nody, whisk, hole, sant, new cut.”

According to *The Quarterly Review*, January, 1871, Whisk continued to be spelt with a *k* for about forty years after Taylor's mention of it. The writer in *The Quarterly* says that the earliest known use of the word *whist*, spelt with a *t*, is in the second part of *Hudibras* (spurious), published in 1663, and quoted by Johnson:—

“But what was this? A game at Whist  
Unto our Plowden-Canonist.”

And here, it will be observed, the rhyme requires the alteration.

Later the word was spelt indifferently whisk or whist for many years. Cotton (1674) in his description of the game always spells it whist, but in his account of “Picket” he says the players “follow in suit as at Whisk;” Farquhar (“Beaux's Stratagem,” 1707) spells it whisk; Pope (“Epistle to Mrs. Theresa Blount,” 1715) spells it whisk; Swift (“Essay on the Fates of Clergymen,” 1728) spells it whist; Thomson (“Autumn,” 1730) spells it whist; Fielding (“History of Jonathan Wild the Great,” 1754) spells it whisk; Grose (“Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue,” 1785) spells it whist; the Hon. Daines Barrington (“Archæo-

logia," vol. viii., 1787) spells it whisk and whist. After this, so far as is known, it is always spelt whist.

Charles Cotton describes Whist in "The Compleat Gamester: or Instructions how to play at Billiards, Trucks, Bowls, and Chess. Together with all manner of usual and most Gentile Games either on Cards or Dice. London, 1674." Although he was acquainted with the form Whisk, as already stated, he ignores that in his derivation, saying that the game "is called Whist from the silence that is to be observed in the play."

In 1719, Richard Seymour produced "The Court Gamester: or full and easy Instructions for playing the Games now in Vogue, after the best method; as they are Play'd at Court, and in the Assemblies, viz.: Ombre, Picquet, and the Royal Game of Chess. Written for the Use of the Young Princesses. London." This contains no whist. But about 1734, Cotton's and Seymour's books were incorporated, with the following title:—"The Compleat Gamester: in three Parts, viz. I. Full and easy Instructions for playing the Games chiefly used at Court and in the Assembleés, viz., Ombre, Quadrille, Quintille, Picquet, Basset, Faro, and the Royal Game of Chess. II. The true Manner of playing the most usual Games at Cards, viz., Whist, All-Fours, Cribbage, Put, Lue, Brag, &c., with several diverting Tricks upon the

Cards. III. Rules for playing at all the Games both within and without the Tables ; likewise at English and French Billiards. Also the Laws of each Game annexed to prevent Disputes. London."

Under Whist we find, " Whist, vulgarly called Whisk. The Original Denomination of this game is Whist : Or, The *Silent* Game at Cards." And again, " Talking is not allowed at Whist ; the very Word implies, *Hold your Tongue.*"

Seymour seems to be strangely wrong in this statement, which he no doubt amplified from Cotton. The "original denomination," so far as is known, was Whisk ; and if this is admitted all derivations from the interjection commanding silence require reconsideration.

Nevertheless, the Whist-silence derivation was supported by Johnson and Nares. It is true that Dr. Johnson cautiously avoided saying that Whist means silence. He defined Whist as "a game at cards, requiring close attention and silence," and from this it may be inferred that he had in his mind the accepted etymology, but that he doubted its accuracy. Nares, however, in his "Glossary," rushed in where Johnson feared to tread. He well remarks in his preface that he knows "the extreme fallaciousness of the science of etymology when based on mere similarity of sound." But under "Whist" he forgets his own canon, for he

says, "That the name of the game of Whist is derived from this, is known, I presume, to all who play or do not play."

Other authorities reject the derivation of Whist from silence. Dr. E. Cobham Brewer justly writes:—

"It is hardly necessary to state that the vulgar etymology of 'whist,' from the interjection meaning *silence*, is wholly worthless, because the word is obviously a corruption of the older form 'whisk.' The French 'Dictionnaire Universel des Sciences, des Lettres, et des Artes' says:— 'Whist de l'Anglais *whist* ! (silence!), parce qu'il est défendu de parler à ce jeu, et de faire connaître même à son partner le jeu qu'on a dans la main.' This is not special to the game of whist, but applies with equal force to a score of other games, and even if special cannot be admitted, as the word *whist* is only a corruption of a more ancient name. We will next clear the ground of all those languages which cannot have supplied the word, and thus reduce the area of research to the smallest possible compass. As there is no *w* in Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, &c., we must not look for the word in those languages, at any rate either in the form of *whist* or *whisk*; and, as there is no *wh* in German, we must not look for it in German. Similarly the Scandinavian family of languages is excluded, unless, indeed, it



is some corruption. Now it cannot be a corruption of any Romance, German or Scandinavian word, inasmuch as the word itself exists in several of the European languages, even although they do not possess a *w* or *wh*. Thus in French we have *whist*, although *w* is not a French letter. In German we have *whist*, although *wh* is not a German combination. The same may be said of other nations, and we cannot withhold the obvious conclusion that the word has been borrowed by them from the English and naturalised; or, in other words, that the game is a British game, and the word must be looked for within the British dominions."

The Doctor proposes a Welsh source, *grwis*, tantamount to the French *invite*, lead. Though ingenious, this derivation is said to be philologically untenable, because "gw" in Welsh is represented by "w" in English, and not by "wh."

Chatto, a very careful writer, suggests in his "Facts and Speculations" that whisk is derived by substitution from the word ruff. Ruffs and whisks as articles of dress were practically synonymous. The game already had several *aliases*, viz.: triumph, trump, slam, ruff, and ruff-and-honors. At this time (middle of the seventeenth century) the game was in a transition state, and it seems not unlikely that on another *alias* being added, a word almost synonymous with ruff

should be chosen. At all events this derivation seems less improbable than any other that has been offered. Ruff, as the name of a game, has been supposed to have referenee to the ruff worn by the figures on the coate cards. But this derivation is open to argument.

The following considerations as to the derivation of ruff, are submitted, not dogmatically, but in hopes of contributing to the solution of a disputed and difficult question.

Ruff appears at one time to have meant the point at piquet. In "*Le Royal Jeu du Piquet plaisant et recreatif*," Rouen, 1647, the point is called "*ronfle*." The book was translated into English in 1651, with the following title, "The Royall and delightfull Game of Picquet written in French and now rend'red into English out of the last French Edition." In this work the word "*ronfle*" is translated "ruffe." Cotton, in the "Compleat Gamester," also calls the point the ruff. "After the discarding you must consider the *Ruff*, that is how much you can make of one suit." This, however, does not help us much. Even if ruff is derived from *ronfle*, how did a word, formerly used to signify the point at Piquet, come to designate an English game?

At English-Ruff or Ruff-and-Honors, ruffing did not necessarily mean trumping, as it does at modern Whist. The term was employed in the

sense of discarding. Cotton ("Compleat Gamester") says, "At Ruff and Honors, by some called Slamm, you have in the Pack all the Deuces, and the reason is, because four playing having dealt twelve a piece, there are four left for the Stock, the uppermost whereof is turn'd up, and that is Trumps, he that hath the Ace of that Ruffs; that is, he takes in those four cards, and lays out four others in their lieu."

The connection between discarding and so adding to the point or *ronfle* at Piquet (the great object with good players), and discarding at Ruff-and-Honors and so adding to the number of trumps in hand (trump and ruff being synonymous as will presently appear), is not very remote. One link only is wanting. If it could but be shown that *ronfles* ever meant to discard, or rather to add to the *ronfle* or point by discarding and taking in, the chain would be complete. To assume some such meaning is not more violent than the assumption that whisk is derived by substitution from ruff; at all events, in the absence of a better theory, this may perhaps be allowed to pass muster.

French-Ruff, or *Triomphe* (French) was a kind of Écarté, at which discarding was an essential part of the game. Here again ruffing and discarding are brought face to face. The game is called French-Ruff in the "Compleat Gamester,"

*Triomphe* in the “*Académie des Jeux.*” It must not be confounded with the English game of Trump, which, if not the same game as Ruff-and-Honors, was, like the latter, an imperfect form of Whist.

The derivation of Trump, the game from which Ruff-and-Honors and Whist were derived, is comparatively simple.

Trump is a corruption of the word *triumph*. It occurs both in its original and its corrupt form in Latimer’s sermon “On the Card,” preached at St. Edmund’s Church, Cambridge, the Sunday before Christmas, 1529:—

“And whereas you are wont to celebrate Christ-mass in playing at Cards, I intend, by God’s Grace, to deal unto you Christ’s Cards, wherein you shall perceive Christ’s Rule. The game that we play at shall be called the Triumph, which, if it be well played at, he that dealeth shall win; the Players shall likewise win; and the standers and lookers upon shall do the same; insomuch that there is no Man willing to play at this Triumph with these Cards, but they shall be all winners and no losers  
\* \* \* You must mark also, that the Triumph must apply to fetch home unto him all the other Cards, whatever suit they be of \* \* \*  
Then further we must say to ourselves, What requireth Christ of a Christian Man? Now turn up your Trump, your Heart (Hearts is Trump, as I



said before), and cast your Trump, your Heart, on this Card."

There is abundant evidence that trump and triumph are the same word. Shakespeare (Antony and Cleopatra, Act IV., scene 12) introduces triumph in the double sense of a warlike triumph, and of a trump card. The passage, containing repeated punning allusions to card-playing, leaves no doubt as to the reference to cards in the word triumph.

Again, Seymour, in the "Court Gamester," 1719, says:—"The Term *Trump* comes from a Corruption of the Word *Triumph*; for wherever they are, they are attended with Conquest."

How ruff came to be synonymous with trump is uncertain. In Cotgrave's "French and English Dictionary," 1611, is found "*Triomphe*, The Card Game called Ruffe or Trump," and many other authorities couple the two words in a similar way. Nares, in his "Glossary," says:—"Ruff meant a trump card, *charta dominatrix*."

Another synonym for Ruff-and-Honors was *Slam*. This word is now only applied to the winning of every trick, and the usual derivation given is from *lamen*, to smite. It must be admitted, however, that this etymology requires further investigation.

Soon after Ruff-and-Honors acquired the appellation of Whisk, a term of very strange charac-

ter, viz., *swabbers* or *swobbers* became associated with it. Fielding, in his "History of the Life of the late Mr. Jonathan Wild, the Great," records that when the ingenious Count La Ruse was domiciled with Mr. Geoffrey Snap, in 1682, or, in other words, was in a spunging-house, the Count beguiled the tedium of his in-door existence by playing at Whisk-and-Swabbers, "the game then in the chief vogue." Swift also, in his "Essay on the Fates of Clergymen" (1728), ridicules Archbishop Tenison for not understanding the meaning of swabbers. The story goes that a clergyman was recommended to the Archbishop for preferment, when His Grace said, "he had heard that the clergyman used to play at Whist and swobbers; that as to playing now and then a sober game at Whist, it might be pardoned; but he could not digest those wicked swobbers." Johnson defines swobbers as "four privileged cards used incidentally in betting at Whist." In Captain Francis Grose's "Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue" (1785), swabbers are stated to be "The ace of hearts, knave of clubs, ace and duce of trumps at Whist." The Hon. Daines Barrington (writing in 1787) says, that at the beginning of the century, Whisk was "played with what were called swabbers, which were possibly so termed, because they who had certain cards in their hand were entitled to take up a

share of the stake, independent of the general event of the game."

No satisfactory etymology of the word swabbers can be given. Chatto ("Facts and Speculations") suggests that "the fortunate, clearing the board of this extraordinary stake, might be compared by seamen to the *Swabbers* (or cleaners of the deck)" of a vessel. This must be regarded rather as a "Speculation" than as a "Fact."

Swabbers, as an adjunct to the game of Whist, eventually dropped away. But it seems possible that they may still linger in local coteries. Mr. R. B. Wormald, writing in Cassell's "Popular Recreator," in April, 1873, says:—

"Would the giants of the 'Portland' or 'Arlington' [now The Turf Club] be surprised to hear that in this enlightened nineteenth century the 'swabber' still holds its place in rural Whist, and that we ourselves have personally come across the anachronism? The phenomenon occurred in this wise:—Some few years ago, in the course of a boating trip from Oxford to London, we were driven by stress of weather to take shelter one summer evening in a sequestered hostelry on the Berkshire bank of the Thames, and on entering the parlor we were agreeably surprised to find four local 'Cavendishes' deeply immersed in the 'game of silence,' to the accompaniment of long pipes. In the middle of the hand, one of the

players, with a grin that almost amounted to a chuckle, and a vast display of moistened thumb, spread out upon the table the ace of trumps; whereupon the other three deliberately laid down their hands, and forthwith severally handed over the sum of one penny to the fortunate holder of the card in question. On inquiry, we were informed that the process was technically known as a 'swap' (qy. 'swab' or 'swabber'), and was *de rigueur* in all properly constituted whist circles. Our efforts to elucidate the etymology of the term proved unavailing; but this is scarcely surprising, seeing that the true etymology of 'Whist' itself—though popularly associated with 'silence'—is a very moot point, while the derivation of the word 'ruff' or 'to ruff' is a mystery that, to the best of our knowledge, no lexicographer has ever succeeded in unravelling."

The extreme obscurity which shrouds the etymology of these various technical terms connected with Whist is not less remarkable than the changes of name undergone by the game itself. First in order comes Triumph or Trump, a game of purely English origin, and in no way connected with the French game of *la Triomphe*. Trump, possibly with some additions or alterations, became converted into Ruff-and-Honors, and Slam. Whisk followed, differing but little from these. Swobbers were afterwards joined on to Whisk,



but Whisk-and-Swobbers was abandoned, and our national card-game became simply WHIST, under which name it seems likely to remain for an indefinite time the King of Card-Games.

## DUTIES ON PLAYING-CARDS.

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“It is quite right that there should be a heavy duty on Cards.”—SOUTHEY.

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THAT Playing-Cards, being articles of luxury, are fit objects for the imposition of a duty, is a proposition which can hardly be denied. But what the amount of the duty should be is by no means clear. A high duty checks production, diminishes consumption, and leads to evasion. Experience renders it probable that the present duty of 3d. a pack is about as high a one as can be borne, without defeating its own object, as will appear from the following historical sketch.

A tax was first levied on playing-cards in the reign of James I. (1615). In the “Calendar of State Papers,” Domestic Series, A.D. 1611-1618, is the following minute:—“1615, July 20. Westminster.—(19). Letters Patent granting to Sir Richard Coningsby, for a rent of £200 per annum, the imposition of 5s. per gross on playing-cards, and the office of Inspector of all playing-cards imported in recompense of £1,800 due

to him from the King, and of his patent for the sole export of Tin, granted by the late Queen." Warrant for the above granted July 19.

The proclamation of this patent is preserved in the library of the Society of Antiquaries; and following the proclamation is "The Copie of the Lord Treasurer's Letter," as under:—"After my heartie commendations, whereby it hath pleased his Majestie to direct a Privy Seal to me, touching the imposition of five shillings upon every grosse of Playing Cards that shall be Imported into this Kingdome or the Dominions thereof by vertue of his Majestie's Letters Patents granted to Sir Richard Coningsby knight under the Greate Seale of England. In regard whereof These are to wil and require you to take notice thereof and not to suffer any merchant to make any entry of Playing-Cards until the same impositions be paid according to the said Letters patents. Provided that the Patentees give caution for maintayning the Custome and Import according to a Medium thereof to be made as in such cases is used: And so having signified his Majestie's pleasure to you in that behalfe I bid you heartily farewell.

"Your Louing Friend,

"THO: SUFFOLKE.

"From Northampton House the  
29th of October, 1615."

The date usually taken, probably on the authority of Singer, for the original taxing of cards is 1631. It may be that he confused between the imposition of the tax, and the protest against it made in the reign of Charles I. The duty on cards was one of the taxes then complained of by the Commons "as arbitrary and illegal, and being levied without consent of Parliament."

In the reign of Queen Anne playing-cards were first subjected to a duty with the consent of Parliament. In 1710 an act was passed to obtain an annual sum of £186,670 as a fund or security for raising a sum of £2,602,200, "for carrying on the war, and for other her Majesty's Occasions." It was enacted that playing-cards should pay a duty of sixpence a pack for a term of thirty-two years, commencing June 11, 1711. Under the act, all makers of cards or dice were required to send to the Commissioners of the Stamp Duties on Velum, Parchment, and Paper, notice in writing containing the address of the house or place where cards or dice were manufactured. Makers omitting to send such notice, or manufacturing in houses not notified, became liable to a penalty of £50. Various other vexatious obligations were imposed, as, for example, the makers had to permit the proper officers for the duties in question to enter their houses of business to "take an account of the cards and dice there made," on pen-



alty of £10 for every refusal. The makers were not allowed to remove cards from the factory until the paper and thread enclosing every pack was sealed in such a manner as was satisfactory to the Commissioners of Duties, under pain of forfeiting the goods removed, and treble their value. In addition, the card and dice makers were required to make entry, upon oath, once in every twenty-eight days of the number of cards and dice manufactured by them in the interim, and they had to clear within the ensuing fortnight the amount of duty then declared due. Neglect on these scores was visited by forfeiture of £20 for default in making entry, and double duty for non-payment of the tax within the specified time.

The proposal to lay an impost on playing-cards encountered much opposition. Several petitions against the tax were presented to Parliament, by card-makers and importers of paper, which are sufficiently interesting to be quoted at some length :—

“ Considerations in Relation to THE IMPOSITION ON CARDS, Humbly submitted to the Honourable HOUSE of COMMONS :—

Nine parts in ten of the cards now made are sold from 6s. to 24s. per gross, and even these six shillings in cards by this Duty are subjected to pay £3 12s. tax.

This with humble submission will destroy Nine

Parts in Ten of this manufacture for those Cards which are now bought for 3*d.*, can't then be afforded under 10*d.* or a shilling, for every hand through which they pass will add a gain in consideration of the Tax imposed and therefore the generality of the people will buy none at all.

“If any of your Honours hope by this Tax to suppress expensive Card-playing, It is answered, That the Common sort who play for innocent diversion will by this tax be only hinder'd; for those sharp gamesters who play for money but do not use the Twentieth part of the Cards sold, will not by this Tax be discouraged; for those who play for many Pounds at a game will not be hindered by paying 12*d.* per pack: And the destruction of this manufacture will be attended with these ill consequences:—

“*First.* Nothing (in comparison) will be (clear of all charges) raised by this duty imposed.

“*Secondly.* All that depend upon this manufacture will be rendered incapable to maintain their numerous families or pay their debts.

“*Thirdly.* The English paper manufacture (which is the middle of the Cards) will be extreamly prejudiced.

“*Fourthly.* The importation of the *Genoa* White Paper (with which the Cards are covered) will be very much diminished; and in the consequence thereof,

"*Fifthly and lastly.* Her Majesty will lose as much Paper duty as the clear Duty on the Cards to be sold will amount unto.

"And if it be intended to charge the Stock in hand, then the present Possessors will be thereby obliged to pay a Duty for Ten times more Cards than ever they will sell.

"*Wherefore it is humbly hoped, That your Honours will not lay a Duty which it's humbly conceived will bring no profit to the QUEEN, but inevitably ruin many hundreds of her subjects.*"

The merchants importing Genoa paper and others followed suit in a similar strain:—

"The case of the Merchants Importing Genoa paper, the Stationers, Haberdashers of small ware, the English Paper-makers, and Card-makers.

"In relation to the Intended Duty on Cards, humbly submitted to the Honourable House of Commons."

The preamble with slight alterations proceeds as in the previous petition down to the end of the first "ill consequence," and then the petition continues as follows:—

"*Secondly.* The English Paper-Manufacture extremely prejudiced, because by a modest computation there are 150 Paper Mills in England and each of these one with another Annually make 400 Rheams; one-Fourth of which is now used in the ordinary cards, and none of these will (when this great Duty is imposed) be ever made.

“*Thirdly.* Her Majesty’s Customs arising from the Importation of Genoa Paper will be extremely lessen’d: for it is reasonably supposed that there are 40,000 Rheams of Genoa paper annually used in this manufacture, which already pays Custom 10*d.* per Rream, amounting to £1,666 13*s.*, which by this intended duty will be quite lost, the said Genoa paper being of little use but in Card-making.

“*Fourthly.* Three parts in four of the Card-makers, and the many families which depend upon them, will by this intended Tax be inevitably ruin’d, for those Card-makers depend upon their credit and work 8 months in 12 for the Winter-Season, and during those 8 months scarce receive enough to find their families with Bread, and therefore can never pay this *great Duty*, and consequently not follow their trade.

“Seeing by this intended Duty her Majesty’s loss in her Customs, the loss of the merchants importing paper, of the Stationers who credit the Card-makers, of the Wholesale Haberdashers who sell the Cards, and of the Card-makers, will amount to five times more than this designed imposition can clear of all charges be suppos’d to raise; and five parts in six of the Card-makers and their numerous *Dependents* inevitably ruined.

“*It is therefore humbly hop’d this Honourable House will give relief in the Premises.*”



The poor Card-makers and the Company of Card-makers also presented petitions against the tax, in language almost identical. The following is the petition known as that of the "poor" card-makers:—

"Reasons Humbly offer'd by the Card-makers against the Tax upon Playing-Cards.

"The Card-makers in and about the City of London are about One Hundred Master Workmen. For sometime past (Paper having been double the Price as formerly) the trade is much decayed.

"The most they sell their Cards for to the Retailers (one sort with another) is Three Half-pence the Pack, and their Profit not above one Half-penny. So that the Tax intended will be double the value of the Cards and six times their gain.

"The generality of these Card-makers are Poor men and out of the Small Gains above can hardly maintain their families: And therefore to impose a Tax to be immediately paid upon making by the Card-makers (whose Stocks and Abilities are so very mean, that they now make hard shift to forbear the Retailers the ordinary time of Credit) will be a direct way to Ruine these Poor Men.

"Besides there is at present a Stock of Cards in the retailers' hands sufficient for the consumption of Four or Five years; and they will assuredly sell all the old stock off before they take any at

the New advanced rate : The consequence whereof will be :—

“ *First.* That the Card-makers till that stock be sold off can make no new ones.

“ *Secondly.* That during that time their Families must needs starve.

“ *Lastly.* That until the card-makers can make new ones no money can arise by such Tax.”

Her Majesty's “occasions,” however, were such, that opposition was fruitless, and the Act became law. The duty was imposed on all cards “made fit for sale” during a certain term. In the following year it was found expedient, for the better securing the duties on playing-cards, and to prevent defrauding of the revenue, to amend this, and to enact that all stocks of cards which were fit for sale before the operation of the former act commenced, and which remained unsold in the hands of any person trading in cards, should be brought to the Stamp-office to be marked. On the traders making oath that the stocks so brought were actually made and finished before the 12th of June, 1711, they were entitled on payment of one half-penny per pack to have them sealed or stamped accordingly. All cards not brought to the Office before the 1st of August, 1712, were to be deemed to be made fit for sale after June, 1711, and to be charged with the full duty. And after July, 1712, no playing-cards were to be exposed

for sale or used in play in any public gaming-house unless marked in conformity with the provisions of the act, both on the wrapper and on the spotted or painted side (now called the fore-side), of one of the cards of each pack.

By the same Act the regulations permitting the search entry of revenue officers to the houses of card-makers were extended to public gaming-houses; and the notices required to be given by card-makers, and the clauses relating to the removal of unstamped cards, were amended and made more stringent.

Offenders against these provisions were rendered liable to a penalty of £5 for every pack of unstamped cards found in their possession. It was also made felony, punishable with death, to counterfeit or forge the seals, stamps, or marks which denoted the payment of the duties. About ninety-five years ago the punishment of death was actually inflicted on an unfortunate engraver named Harding, who engraved a duty ace of spades to the order of a card-maker. The card-maker escaped from the country, or he would, in all probability, have shared the engraver's fate.

Despite the precautions and penalties enumerated, frauds on the revenue continued. Indeed, every enactment relating to playing-cards is accompanied by some reference to fraudulent practices with regard to the duties under the former

Act. It was now discovered that persons were in the habit, after cards had been used, of cutting out and tearing off the marks placed on the fore-side of playing-cards, for the purpose of affixing the same marks to fresh packs, and so of making one stamp serve over and over again. There was also a method contrived to render available for further use the seal and stamp upon the outside papers or wrappers. In order to check these proceedings a clause was introduced into an Act passed in 6 Geo. I. (1719) "for preventing frauds and abuses in the public revenues." A penalty of £10 was imposed on any person convicted of working up old stamps; and, when it was suspected that cards were being made up for sale in any private place (that is in any place of which the Commissioners of Stamps had not the usual written notice), power was given to the revenue officers, on a warrant being granted, to break open the doors of the suspected places, and to enter, and seize all "cards, dice, tools, and materials with which they are made."

Further, the term of thirty-two years over which the duty upon playing-cards was to remain in force was extended indefinitely.

Matters remained in the state described until 29 Geo. II. (1756), when an additional tax of six-pence a pack was imposed on playing-cards. As usual, the opportunity was taken to frame meas-



ures in expectation of preventing the fraudulent evasions of the duty which still obtained. It transpired that great frauds were committed under pretence that cards were manufactured for exportation, such cards being exempt from duty. It was therefore enacted that all playing-cards intended for exportation should be distinguished by a particular wrapper, and that one card in each export pack should be marked with a special stamp. Cards wrapped and stamped as for exportation were not to be used in Great Britain, under a penalty of £20. A £20 penalty was also attached to the selling and buying of any covers or labels that had been already used.

It appeared also that the trick of selling slightly soiled playing-cards as "waste" was largely practised, to the detriment of the revenue. The soiled cards consisted of those so damaged in making as to be rejected by the manufacturers. They were purchased for a few pence per pound, chiefly by Jew speculators, who sorted them and disposed of them at a cheap rate. In order to put a stop to this system, all persons disposing of cards "commonly called waste cards" were required before sale to "mark the back or plain side of every painted or picture card in such manner as to render the same unfit to be used in play."

In the reign of George III. no less than seven

Acts of Parliament were passed relating to cards and dice. All this legislation tended to two ends,—to impose additional duties, and to circumvent the evaders of the tax. It was more than suspected that the Inland Revenue officers were tampered with. A new plan was therefore resolved on. Hitherto the stamp had been impressed on the card made by the manufacturers, the card selected being generally, if not always, the ace of spades. But from and after the 5th July, 1765, makers of playing-cards were required to send to the Stamp Office the paper on which the ace of spades was to be impressed. The Commissioners of Stamps were to print the duty aces of spades themselves, and had a plate prepared for the purpose, with a device somewhat similar to that in use up to 1863, only less elaborate. The Commissioners had the power of altering the device at pleasure, in order to throw difficulties in the way of counterfeiting it. The card-makers were further required to send to the office the wrappers which they proposed to use for enclosing the cards. The wrappers were to have the maker's name printed on them, and were to be stamped with a sixpenny stamp. This stamp was not an additional duty. The duty still remained at one shilling: but the mode of imposition was varied, so that one half of the duty fell on the ace of spades, and the other half on the wrapper. At the same time, the penal-

ty for refusing to allow inspection of premises where card-making was carried on was raised from £20 to £50.

Eleven years later an additional duty of sixpence a pack was levied, making the total duty one shilling and sixpence.

In the meantime the ingenious enemies of the revenue had not been idle. The occupation of selling *waste* cards was gone; but there was no prohibition against selling *second-hand* cards. Accordingly, the card-maker's waste was still sorted into packs, which were disposed of as second-hand cards, "to the great injury of the revenue." A penalty of £5 a pack was therefore imposed on any person selling second-hand cards, unless the backs of the picture cards were so marked as to render them unfit to be used in play.

In 1789, and again in 1801, the duty was further increased by sixpenny steps, till it reached the sum of half-a-crown a pack. The traffic in cards not duly stamped was powerfully stimulated by the high duty. Various evasive devices were invented, and more than one speculator amassed a large fortune by selling, under various pretences, cards on which no duty had been paid. Under the then arrangements, waste aces of spades could not be procured to any great extent, for the damaged aces were returned to the Stamp Office, and allowed for in the card-makers' accounts. Packs,

therefore, were made up for sale with a blank card in place of the ace of spades. Cut-corner cards, as they were called, *i.e.*, packs of cards of which one corner was cut off, and minus the ace of spades, were sold in immense quantities. Cards with a corner cut off, half an inch in depth, were considered by Parliament sufficiently mutilated to render them unfit to be used in play. The public, however, put up with the inconvenience of using cut-corner cards rather than pay the high tax. In fact, the law was found powerless to prevent evasions; every fresh enactment produced some fresh dodge for driving through it. It was therefore decided to diminish the duty, and to legalize, under certain restrictions, the sale of second-hand cards. In the year 1828, the half-a-crown duty was reduced to one shilling. The shilling duty was to be denoted on the ace of spades. This was the "duty one shilling" ace, called "Old Frizzle," on account of the elaborate flourishes which adorned it, with which all card-players, prior to 1864, were familiar. The aces were supplied on credit to the card-makers, the duty being exacted from time to time on their making up their packs for sale, when an officer had to attend to put on the wrappers, and to take an account of the numbers. Second-hand cards were permitted to be sold, except by licensed card-makers, provided the words "second-hand



cards" were legibly printed or written on the wrapper.

Under the protection of this permission the sale of so-called second-hand cards flourished more vigorously than ever. The less scrupulous manufacturers used to make "works" of waste by the ton, for the purpose of sale under the name of second-hand cards. Indeed the clandestine manufacture of cards sold as second-hand was so extensive, that one person alone "owned to the sale of more unstamped packs in one year than the whole number which, according to the revenue returns, had been charged with duty in the same period, that is to say, upwards of 260,000 packs." Consequently, by 25 Vict. (June, 1862) the duty was fixed at three-pence per pack, the alteration to commence on 1st September, 1862. The financial year ends 31st March, therefore in 1862, half the year the duty was one shilling, the other half three-pence. In the seventh Report of the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Inland Revenue, 1863, it is stated that the alteration from one shilling to three-pence was made "in the hope of suppressing the enormous evasion of the duty which notoriously prevailed." At the same time that the amount was reduced, the form in which the duty was levied was altered. Several other reasons for the alteration are given in the Report. The Commissioners remark that "there were

many disadvantages connected with these arrangements," [*i.e.*, with the arrangements which prevailed prior to 1863.] The principal disadvantages were the expense incurred in printing the aces, and the difficulty of adjusting the card-makers' accounts. The card-makers were always in arrear; they always had more aces supplied than were accounted for in the packs made up for sale; and though the department had the power of taking an account of the stock not made up for sale, and held by the card-makers, and of charging for aces not accounted for, the power was but occasionally exercised, on account of the practical difficulty of taking exact stock without serious inconvenience to the makers. Moreover, when stock was taken, a deficiency of aces always appeared, even with the most respectable makers, who were above the suspicion of intentionally defrauding the revenue. This deficiency was, in many instances, allowed to stand over, so that in practice the amount thus owing was as good as remitted.

According to the statement of the Commissioners, it appeared that, "from the mode in which the ace of spades was necessarily prepared at the office, that important card was always different from the rest of the pack, and that this difference, though slight, was to those who were aware of it, readily perceptible by the touch," so

that, in fact, the duty, "which was meant to be *pro tanto* a discouragement to gambling, was abetting the designs of the card sharper."

The difference here alluded to is as to the size of the card; this might have been the case with small makers using imperfect machinery; but manufacturers of repute, who could properly manipulate the cards, were able to turn out the ace of spades precisely like the other cards as to size, thickness, and feel.

The idea that the duty was meant to discourage gambling is purely imaginary. It was meant simply to increase the revenue in aid of Her Majesty's "occasions;" and as was well pointed out in the petition presented to Parliament in the reign of Queen Anne, a tax only hinders the common sort who play for innocent diversion, and not sharp gamesters who play for many pounds a game.

Under the present system the ace of spades is free from duty, and is printed by the manufacturers in the same way as the other cards. The duty is now levied on the seal or wrapper in which each pack must be enclosed before it is sold; and the duty applies to all full-sized playing-cards, whether new or second-hand. The wrappers are supplied from Somerset House as the card-makers require them, and have the name of the manufacturer printed on them.

Thus: suppose a new pack is opened and, as is

the case at most clubs, is used only once. Under the old law the soiled pack was exempt from further duty if the words "second-hand cards" were legibly written or printed on the wrapper. Now, however, second-hand cards before being resold must be enclosed in a fresh wrapper and pay a second duty.

In 1861 the amount of duty received at one shilling a pack was £14,533, 290,660 packs being sealed. In 1862—mostly at one shilling, but a small part at threepence—the duty produced £13,637, notwithstanding that about 160,000 more packs were sealed than before. When the new *régime* came into full operation in 1863, 732,960 packs were sealed, a very large increase when compared with the number stamped under the old *régime*. Nevertheless, the receipts, owing to the reduction, amounted only to £9,162, entailing a loss of about £4,450. After 1867, however, the number of packs sealed steadily increased, to 737,120, 813,920, 968,800, and so on; and in 1873 the number stamped was over a million. In 1877-78 the duty rose to £14,139, so that at the present time the smaller duty produces as much as the larger one did within a few pounds. And what is highly satisfactory is that there is no reason for supposing that there is now any evasion of the duty.



## MOLIÈRE ON PIQUET.

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“Come, you shall sit down to piquet.”

—*School for Scandal*, Act i., sc. 2.

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MOLLIÈRE, like our Shakespeare, seems to have had a universal knowledge. Whatever he wrote about he probed, as it were, to the bottom. Among other things he must have had a profound knowledge of Piquet, or must have obtained his information from players of a very superior class, as the following example will demonstrate.

In the year 1661 appeared the comedy of “*Les Fâcheux*.” This play contains a somewhat remarkable Piquet hand, which is interesting as showing that Piquet was at that time a popular game in France, and also as illustrating the mode in which the game was then played, and, further, as affording room for instructive comment. The following is a free translation of the passage relating to Piquet:—

“Console me, Marquis, for the extraordinary partie at Piquet I lost yesterday against St. Bouvain, a man to whom I could deal and give fifteen points. It is a maddening coup which crushes me, and which makes me wish all players at the devil;—a coup enough to make a man go and hang himself. I only wanted two points; he required a pique. I dealt; he proposed a fresh deal. I, having pretty good cards in all suits, refused. He takes six cards. Now observe my bad luck: I carry ace of clubs; ace, king, knave, ten, eight of hearts; and throw out (as I considered it best to keep my point) king, queen of diamonds, and queen, ten of spades. I took in the queen to my point, which made me a quint major. To my amazement, my adversary showed the ace and a sixième minor in diamonds, the suit of which I had discarded king and queen. But, as he required a pique, I was not alarmed, expecting to make at least two points in play. In addition to his seven diamonds he had four spades, and, playing them, he put me to a card, for I did not know which of my aces to keep. I thought it best to throw the ace of hearts, but he had discarded all his four clubs, and capoted me with the six of hearts! I was so vexed I could not say a word. Confound it! why do I have such frightful luck?”

In order to render the hand intelligible, it is necessary to bear in mind that at the time “Les

Fâcheux" was written Piquet was played with thirty-six cards, the sixes being included in the pack. There were twelve cards in the stock, instead of eight as now, of which the elder hand might take eight, the younger four. The cards below a ten did not count in play; or rather, according to the "Academy of Play," "they sometimes tell one for every card they lead or win, whether a tenth card or not, so that when two players sit down, who are not acquainted with each other's play, it is customary to ask, Whether you count all the cards or not?" In the hand given the nines, eights, sevens, and sixes do not count in play.

Molière has skilfully heaped up the various small worries that may annoy an irritable player during a hand. The score is one source of annoyance: St. Bouvain wants a pique, Alcippe (his adversary) only wants two, and has such cards that though a pique is not impossible it is the highest degree improbable. As Fielding ("Tom Jones") truly remarks, "The gamester who loses a party at Piquet by a single point, laments his bad luck ten times as much as he who never came within a prospect of the game." Again, Alcippe has the chance offered him of a fresh deal, which implies that his adversary has very bad cards—so bad, that he deems losing next door to certain. The fresh deal is refused, and, notwithstanding, St.

Bouvain wins. Then the elder hand, having a right to take eight cards, only takes six, which is a disagreeable surprise after proposing a fresh deal, as Alcippe would naturally wonder how it could be that, notwithstanding the bad hand, St. Bouvain can afford to leave two cards ; and, lastly, Alcippe is put to a card, which is by no means pleasant at any time, but is most unpleasant of all when you have two aces and require one trick only to win, and must lose if you keep the wrong one. An imaginative reader, too, might discover another aggravation. Alcippe, though he declares he lost by bad luck, really loses by bad play (as will be presently shown), and he expresses his intention, in a passage not translated, of going about showing the hand to everybody. It will certainly happen that some "good-natured friend" will point out to him in a day or two how he might have won.

Let us point the moral of the hand by taking the office of that friend. In order to do so, it will be advisable to follow the plan adopted by Dr. Pole in the case of Belinda's celebrated hand at Ombre, viz., to set out all the cards, supplying those not named by Molière, in the most probable combinations suitable to the hand.

St. Bouvain's hand, then, would be *sixième* minor in diamonds (*i.e.*, knave, ten, nine, eight, seven, six) ; four clubs, say king, queen, nine, seven ; and



nine, seven of hearts. He discards the four clubs and the two hearts, keeping his sixième, and takes in the ace of diamonds, the six of hearts, and four spades, say the ace, king, knave, and eight.

Alcippe deals himself king, queen of diamonds ; queen, ten of spades ; ace, king, knave, ten, eight of hearts ; and three clubs, say ace, knave, eight. The knave and eight are given that there may be no tierce against him in this suit ; this seems to be intended, as the Author, with probably the same object, gives him the eight of hearts. Also Alcippe must not hold a trio of kings, queens or tens, or he wins, as any trio is good ; consequently his clubs must be knave and eight. In addition, the knave of clubs in his hand prevents his adversary from holding a trio. He discards the diamonds, spades, and knave, eight of clubs, and takes in nine, seven, six of spades, queen of hearts, and ten, six of clubs.

The hand is then played, with the following result : St. Bouvain's point and sixième are good for twenty-three ; three counting diamonds played make twenty-six, and three counting spades, twenty-nine. St. Bouvain has now played seven diamonds and four spades, eleven cards, and remains with one card, the six of hearts ; Alcippe remains with ace of hearts and ace of clubs, and he has to play one of these to the last spade led by

St. Bouvain. Alcippe plays the heart, and St. Bouvain, winning the trick with his last card, the six of hearts, counts one for the last trick, which he would not have counted had he lost the trick; and he piques and capots his opponent. The capot which wins the game would suffice without the pique, supposing St. Bouvain to have taken in only two counting spades; and, indeed this is the explanation of the hand given by the French commentators. But it appears more probable that this is not the result intended by Molière. He carefully states that the queen, ten of spades were discarded by Alcippe, leaving us to infer that St. Bouvain may hold three counting spades. Molière makes Alcippe repeat that there is no pique against him, and yet he is piqued after all—an additional grievance, although it does not affect the result.

It is obvious that St. Bouvain plays the hand faultlessly, and it is equally clear that Alcippe (notwithstanding his boast of superior play) loses the game by not discarding to the score, as no doubt the good-natured friend already alluded to sooner or later points out to him. If he discards properly he must make two points, unless his adversary carries all the diamonds, and either the quart-minor in spades with the ace, or a tierce in spades with ace, king; and even then Alcippe may win with a trio of kings or queens. The chance

that Alcippe will take in any one of the diamonds, or any one of the spades, or the king of clubs, or the queen of hearts, in six cards (*i.e.* one of sixteen named cards out of twenty-four), is so enormously in his favor, that he would be justified in considering there is no pique against him. His game then, playing for two points, is simply to protect himself from a capot by keeping guards to his weak suits, and throwing out his point, which at this score is useless to him. If he discards ace, knave, ten, eight of hearts, and knave, eight of clubs, he is morally certain to win. This is a good illustration of discarding to the score, and affords a lesson to beginners at Piquet. It will be observed that the ace of hearts is discarded instead of the king, for this reason. Any ace taken in wins the game, whether the trio of aces is kept or not; but the king of clubs or king of spades taken in does not win against a seven-card suit in diamonds, and ace with quart-minor in spades, or ace, king, accompanied by a tierce in spades, unless the kings are kept.

Alcippe again plays badly in throwing the ace of hearts to the last spade. Had he gone on the chances, he would have won. It is evident that, in order to save the game, St. Bouvain's last card must be a non-counting card; for St. Bouvain, having twenty-nine and the lead, gains a pique if his remaining card is a counting card, because the

point made in play by the leader counts before the point made in play by the winner of the trick. Now St. Bouvain may hold one of three non-counting hearts, viz., the nine, the seven, or the six; but he can only hold one of two non-counting clubs, viz., the nine or the seven. This being so, there are three chances to two in favor of his last card being a non-counting heart as against a non-counting club; and, therefore, Alcippe should keep the heart in preference to the club. This is a point in the game well worthy of attention, as, if it were not essential for St. Bouvain's last card to be a non-counting card, the club would be the suit to keep, there being four clubs out and only three hearts.



## THE DUFFER'S WHIST MAXIMS.

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“Printed for the benefit of families, and to prevent scolding.”

—*Bob Short.*

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1. DO not confuse your mind by reading a parcel of books. Surely you've a right to play your own game, if you like. Who are the people that wrote these books? What business have they to set up their views as superior to yours? Many of these writers lay down this rule: “Lead originally from your strongest suit;” don't you do it unless it suits your hand. It may be good in some hands, but it doesn't follow that it should be in all. Lead a single card sometimes, or at any rate from your weakest suit, so as to make your little trumps when the suit is returned. By following this course in leads, you will nine times out of ten ruin both your own and your partner's hands; but the tenth time you will perhaps make several little trumps, which would have been useless otherwise. In addition to this, if sometimes you lead from your strongest suit, and sometimes

from your weakest, it puzzles the adversaries, and they never can tell what you have led from.

2. Seldom return your partner's lead : you have as many cards in your hand as he has, it is a free country, and why should you submit to his dictation? Play the suit you deem best, without regard to any preconceived theories. It is an excellent plan to lead out first one suit and then another. This mode of play is extremely perplexing to the whole table. If you have a fancy for books you will find this system approved by "J. C." He says, "You mystify alike your adversaries and your partner. You turn the game upside down, reduce it to one of chance, and, in the scramble, may have as good a chance as your neighbors."

3. Especially do not return your partner's lead in trumps, for not doing so now and then turns out to be advantageous. Who knows but you may make a trump by holding up, which you certainly cannot do if your trumps are all out? Never mind the fact that you will generally lose tricks by refusing to play your partner's game. Whenever you succeed in making a trump by your refusal, be sure to point out to your partner how fortunate it was that you played as you did. Perhaps your partner is a much better player than you, and he may on some former occasion, with an exceptional hand, have declined

to return your lead of trumps. Make a note of this. Remind him of it if he complains of your neglecting to return his lead. It is an unanswerable argument.

4. There are a lot of rules, to which, however, you need pay no attention, about leading from sequences. What can it matter which card of a sequence you lead? The sequence cards are all of the same value, and one of them is as likely to win the trick as another. Besides, if you look at the books, you'll find the writers don't even know their own minds. They advise in some cases that you should lead the highest, in others the lowest of the sequence; and in leading from ace, king, queen, they actually recommend you to begin with the middle card. Any person of common sense must infer from this that it don't matter which card of a sequence you lead.

5. There are also a number of rules about the play of the second, third, and fourth hands, but they are quite unworthy serious consideration. The exceptions are almost as numerous as the rules, so if you play by no rule at all you are about as likely to be right as wrong.

6. Before leading trumps always first get rid of all the winning cards in your plain suit. You will not then be bothered with the lead after trumps are out, and you thus shift all the responsibility of mistakes on to your partner. But if

your partner has led a suit, be careful when you lead trumps to keep in your hand the best card of his lead. By this means, if he goes on with his suit, you are more likely to get the lead after trumps are out, which, the books say, is a great advantage.

7. Take every opportunity of playing false cards, both high and low. For by deceiving all round you will now and then win an extra trick. It is often said, "Oh, but you deceive your partner." That is very true. But then, as you have two adversaries and only one partner, it is obvious that by running dark you play two to one in your own favor. Besides this, it is very gratifying, when your trick succeeds, to have taken in your opponents, and to have won the applause of an ignorant gallery. If you play in a commonplace way, even your partner scarcely thanks you. Anybody could have done the same.

8. Whatever you do, never attend to the score, and don't watch the fall of the cards. There is no earthly reason for doing either of these. As for the score, your object is to make as many as you can. The game is five, but, if you play to score six or seven, small blame to you. Never mind running the risk of not getting another chance of making even five. Keep as many pictures and winning cards as you can in your hand. They are pretty to look at, and if you remain



with the best of each suit you effectually prevent the adversaries from bringing in a lot of small cards at the end of the hand. As to the fall of the cards, it is quite clear that it is of no use to watch them; for, if everybody at the table is trying to deceive you, in accordance with Maxim 7, the less you notice the cards they play the less you will be taken in.

9. Whenever you have ruined your hand and your partner's by playing in the way here recommended, you should always say that it "made no difference." It sometimes happens that it has made no difference, and then your excuse is clearly valid. And it will often happen that your partner does not care to argue the point with you, in which case your remark will make it clear to everybody that you have a profound insight into the game. If, however, your partner chooses to be disagreeable, and succeeds in proving you to be utterly ignorant of the first elements of Whist, stick to it that you played right, that good play will sometimes turn out unfortunately, and accuse your partner of judging by results. This will generally silence him.

10. Invariably blow up your partner at the end of every hand. It is not only a most gentleman-like employment of spare time, but it gains you the reputation of being a first-rate player.

DECISIONS  
OF  
THE LATE MR. CLAY



# DECISIONS

OF

## THE LATE MR. CLAY.

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### ON THE PRINCIPLES WHICH SHOULD GUIDE DECISIONS.

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“ Is that the law ?

Thyself shalt see the act :

For, as thou urgest justice, be assured

Thou shalt have justice.”

—*Merchant of Venice*, Act IV., sc. 1.

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IT would hardly be fair to the memory of Mr. Clay to print the following Decisions without some preliminary explanation of the general principles which should be present to the mind of every one who is likely to read them.

There is a popular belief that card-laws are intended to prevent cheating. This belief, however, is altogether erroneous. The penalty of



cheating is exclusion from Society. Card-laws cannot touch cheating, nor punish it. The intention of card-laws is : 1. To preserve the harmony and to determine the ordering of the card-table ; and 2. To prevent any player from obtaining an unfair advantage.

By "unfair" is not meant *intentional* unfairness. By accident or carelessness any player may gain an advantage to which he is not entitled. Here the law steps in, and seeks to prevent the gaining of such an advantage. And, be it observed, the law does not attempt to *punish* the accidental or careless offender, but only to obtain *restitution*.

The above considerations lead at once to two fundamental principles on which card Decisions should be framed.

1. As the offending player is credited with *bona fides*, the intention of the player interested must not be taken into account. The case must be judged by the amount of injury which the irregularity may inflict on the opponents ; and 2. The penalty must be proportioned as closely as possible to the amount of gain which may accrue to the offender.

For example : The dealer, by his own fault, exposes a card in dealing. Possibly the dealer has seen it, and the adversaries have not. They have a right to see it ; and they then have the option

of a fresh deal. If they choose not to have a fresh deal, it is to be presumed they consider that, on the whole, the dealer and his partner will gain no advantage, or may even be at a disadvantage, if the position of the card in question is known.

If the law were that the dealer loses his deal on exposing a card, that would be a punishment, as he would have to forego the advantage of the deal. By giving the adversaries the option of a fresh deal, they are protected from injury, and the dealer is not punished.

The laws of Whist only afford one example of punishment, viz.: in the revoke penalty. The offence, however, is very gross, and there are practical difficulties in the way of adjusting the penalty, with precision, to the gain which might ensue in consequence of the revoke.

In a perfect code there should be a penalty for all errors or irregularities by which the offender or his partner *might* profit. And it follows that there should be no penalty for errors by which he who commits them *cannot possibly* gain an advantage. But, as Mr. Clay says:—"However carefully laws may have been framed, cases will not unfrequently occur for which it has been impossible to provide, and which should therefore be referred for decision to some player of recognized judgment, well acquainted with the laws of Whist.

If he happens to be a good lawyer to boot, so much the better; for I have known many questions at this game not unworthy of a lawyer's practised acuteness, and of the habit which his profession gives him of weighing right and wrong."

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### CLAIMING HONORS.

LAW 6.—Honors, unless claimed before the trump card of the following deal is turned up, cannot be scored.

*Case.*—A B claim "the game," and score it. After the trump card of the following deal is turned up Y Z (their adversaries) object that A B have not claimed honors.

*Decision.*—"It is necessary, and has always been the law by tradition, to make it obligatory to call honors, as well as to score them, as points merely scored may easily escape notice.

"It never, however, can have been intended to stretch the rule to such a case as this, in which, by claiming 'the game,' attention is as strongly drawn to the claim of honors as it well can be.

"Such a claim can hardly have been made, except for the purpose of having the point decided, and, in spite of the strict letter of the law, I consider the claim bad.

"Other cases may be found where the rigid

interpretation of a necessary law would inflict a wholly unnecessary wrong ; but I know no case in which such interpretation has been insisted on.

“ If Y or Z had had any doubt about the honors, and if there had been no evidence beyond the assertion of his adversaries, the law would have protected him ; and he ought to require nothing more.

“ If Y or Z tells me that he was in no way called upon to admit the honors, I can only answer that this is a case between him and his conscience. I think he did right in making the admission, and have little doubt but that he will do the same on any other occasion.

“ In giving this opinion, not without hesitation, I bear in mind the extreme general inconvenience of allowing any lax interpretation of a law.”

It should be stated, in order to explain the reason for the first and third paragraphs of the decision, that it was given very shortly after the adoption of the present code, and therefore before Law 6, as quoted above, was generally known.

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#### MISDIRECTION BY ADVERSARIES.

*Case.*—A, B, C are playing dummy, C having the dummy.

It is dummy's deal. By mistake, C deals for himself instead of for dummy, and turns up.



Then, seeing the trump card on the table, C says, "Whose is this?"

A B reply, "Dummy's," imagining C had dealt for his dummy.

C then sorted dummy's hand, and placed the turn-up card with it.

It was then discovered that dummy had fourteen cards, and C twelve.

C then says, "Oh! it is a misdeal."

A B say, "No; the mistake is obvious. Just put the turn-up card to your hand, and all will be right."

It was decided by a bystander to be a misdeal, which was unfortunate for A B, as they had game in their hands.

Was it a misdeal?

*Decision.*—"If it is allowed, or can be proved, that dummy's partner dealt,—whether in or out of his turn matters not, as the deal was completed without objection,—the deal is good. The trump card has been placed in one part of the table instead of another;—*viola tout*. Every one knows it, and it can be put in its right place,—before a card has been played,—without inconvenience.

"This is all the more strong, in the present case, as the card was wrongly placed in consequence of the mistaken intimation of the adversary.

"Strictly, perhaps, the dealer ought not to have

asked his adversary to help him, but should have thought over the puzzle himself, which he would probably have found out [by counting his cards]. This gives the adversaries a right not to answer, but does not excuse them for answering wrongly."

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### CARD JUMPING INTO ADVERSARY'S HAND.

*Case.*—A, in taking up his cards, the deal being completed, bends a card so that it jumps on Y's (the adversary's) packet. At that moment Y takes up his hand, and mixes the card with it, so that no one can tell which is the added card.

What is to be done?

*Decision.*—"This is one of those queer cases,—assisted by no analogy which occurs to me,—which can only be the subject of what I should call a fancy decision.

"I agree with you [the Author had already given his opinion] that the dealer must not suffer by an irregularity which had its origin in an adversary. Nor can I acquit Y of some carelessness; and I think that justice is satisfied by A's drawing a card at hazard from Y's hand.

"If A had been the dealer's partner, I should give the choice of a new deal to his adversaries. They electing to stand the deal, *before seeing their cards*, a card to be drawn at hazard. The cards seen, nothing remains, I think, but to draw one."

It should be added, for the benefit of those not conversant with the laws of Whist, that taking up the cards is always considered, in deciding cases, as equivalent to seeing them.

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#### DECLARING A CARD, BUT OMITTING TO PLAY IT.

LAW 69.—If any one omit playing to a former trick, and such error be not discovered until he has played to the next, the adversaries may claim a new deal; should they decide that the deal stand good, the surplus card at the end of the hand is considered to have been played to the imperfect trick, but does not constitute a revoke therein.

*Case.*—A B *versus* Y Z. A leads a heart; Y plays knave; B calls out “king,” but does not play any card; Z plays a small heart.

B takes up, turns and quits the trick, consisting of three cards, and leads another card. Two or three tricks are played, and then another heart is led, and B plays the king, when it is discovered that B, having declared the king, omitted to play it.

What is the rule?

*Decision.*—The case was, in the first instance, submitted to the Author, who decided as follows:—

On discovery of the error, B must add the king to the imperfect trick. The words "at the end of the hand," in Law 69, do not signify that B must wait till the end of the hand before rectifying his error; but amount merely to a direction what is to be done with the surplus card if the hand is played out before the error is discovered. Or, it may be, and generally would be, that the player omitting to play to a trick does not declare a card; in that case, the surplus card cannot be added till the end of the hand, because no one can say which of the offender's cards is to be subtracted from his hand.

It might be argued that declaring a card is equivalent to playing it, and that, therefore, B has not omitted to play to a trick. But, looking at the consequences that might ensue if players were allowed to declare their cards instead of playing them, I think a person declaring a card and not playing it does omit to play to a trick within the meaning of Law 69, and that the adversaries have the option of a fresh deal.

The Author's decision was objected to by a player for whose opinion he entertained a high regard. Consequently, he submitted the case to Clay, who favored him with the decision below:—

"I quite agree with your decision in this case, viz.: that Y Z have a right to elect whether the deal shall stand or not, and that, if they decide to



go on, the king of hearts should be added to the imperfect trick.

“It seems that this decision is challenged, and that the objection made to it is thus expressed : — ‘ Either B has omitted to play to the trick or he has not, and it ought to be in the option of the adversaries to decide this. If they decide that B has not omitted to play to the trick, the king of hearts is to be added to the trick to which it belongs, and no further penalty remains. On the other hand, if the adversaries decide that B has omitted to play to the trick, they can call a fresh deal. If they elect to stand the deal, then B must play out the hand with a surplus card, the card at the end belonging to the imperfect trick, as enacted in Law 69.’ The objection is ingenious, but fails to convince me. Law 69 contemplated that which would almost invariably be the case in such an error as this, namely, that it would not be found out until the end of the hand. But as, in this instance, the error is early detected, and is of very easy remedy, it seems unnecessarily pedantic to abandon the remedy in deference to the letter of a law which could not contemplate this particular case.

“Your critic proposes, to my mind, an insufficient punishment ; nor can Y Z, by their election, decide that there has been no omission. They cannot alter the fact, and it is beyond doubt that

there *has* been omission. Availing themselves of the general principle, which allows considerable latitude in construing an act as against an offender, they decide that this imperfect act of playing shall be deemed a perfect act. But they do more;—they have a common-sense right to do more;—indeed, they are bound in common-sense to do more; they take care that the imperfect act of playing is made perfect, and they place the king of hearts in the trick to which it belonged from the moment of the declaration to play it.

“If this be not so, observe what may happen. To adopt the form of your critic, either the trick with three cards in it is complete, or it is not. Y Z, by continuing the play of the hand, have decided that the trick is complete; therefore, the king of hearts has taken a trick; the suit is played again, and the king of hearts takes a second trick. It seems to me impossible that this can be permitted *knowingly*; and if in your decision there be—which I do not admit—some difficulty or defective logic, as suggested by your critic, it would be, to my thinking, quite worth while to ride over it, in order to avoid the possible occurrence of an absurdity so monstrous as that which I have described. Two tricks taken by one card! A trick, notoriously imperfect, taken as perfect in one sense and imperfect in another! The ownership of a trick to remain unnecessarily in abeyance

until a surplus card, the existence of which every one knows, and could have prevented, is found at the end of the hand! This surplus card possibly being an advantage to a wrong-doer! All this cumbrous rubbish is cleared away by your very simple and sensible decision.

"I should have more to say, but that I foresee that it would raise a more important question, which I would rather not stir."

What this more important question is can now never be known. No doubt Clay did not care to spend the requisite time over card decisions, as he was fully occupied and wrote under pressure. The original of this decision is written by an amanuensis, to whom, the Author believes, Clay dictated it while he was dressing, that being the only moment he could spare.

The Author can hardly help feeling that the more important question was probably whether a surplus card added to an imperfect trick at the end of a hand can win the trick. In his decision Clay seems to assume that it can. It is a point of extreme difficulty; on the whole, the Author is of opinion that it cannot (see *The Field* of February 27th, 1875), though at the time the case of declaring a card but omitting to play it was submitted to him (December, 1866) he thought it could.

Clay's decision on the original case was much

canvassed at the time ; but finally it was generally allowed to be sound.

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PENALTY FOR RENOUNCING IN ERROR WITH  
MORE THAN ONE CARD.

LAW 76.—If a player discover his mistake [of not following suit when able] in time to save a revoke, the adversaries, whenever they think fit, may call the card thus played in error, or may require him to play his highest or lowest card to that trick in which he has renounced.

*Case.*—In playing to a trick, A plays two cards together, neither being of the suit led. Before a revoke is established A finds that he can follow suit. He is then required by his adversaries to play his highest card of the suit led. Can A then take up both the cards played in error?

It was argued that according to Law 76 A can only take up one card, and must leave the other to be called. If this contention holds, the question arises, Which of the two cards is A entitled to take up?

It is further pointed out that if the word "card" in Law 76 is to be construed as "card or cards," then A might play in a packet every card in his hand, not of the suit led, and on being required to play his highest or lowest of the suit led, might



take up all the cards played in error, when the penalty would be insufficient.

*Decision.*—"I feel that Law 76 meets the case. Either the exposed cards can be called, or the highest or lowest of the suit led."

This decision does not, in words, meet the objection that in the case of the playing of several cards together, calling the highest or lowest of the suit led is an insufficient penalty.

Probably Clay hardly thought it worth while to combat this objection. The reply is evident. The adversaries have the option of calling all the cards played together, or of calling the highest or lowest of the suit led. They will naturally elect the penalty which they deem the more severe.

If it were to their advantage to call all the exposed cards, they then simply allow the offender to play whichever card he pleases to the current trick.

Clay's decision was much canvassed at the time, and it was questioned whether he had the right to make a verbal alteration in Law 76, and to read the words "the card played in error," as "the cards played in error."

On carefully considering this point, the Author is of opinion that Clay's decision is correct. It disposes of all difficulties (as, for example, of the question which of the cards is to be deemed

played to the trick), and cuts the knot simply and effectually.

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### DISPUTED BET ON THE ODD TRICK.

*Case.*—A bets B that B will not get the odd trick. B is the dealer, and makes a misdeal.

A claims the bet, on the ground that B did not get the odd trick.

*Decision.*—Clay wrote, "I am of opinion that the bet is off." In this view he was supported by several members of the Whist Laws Committee of the Portland Club of 1864.

Another member of that Committee, Major Adams, wrote, "My opinion is that A has no right to claim the bet. Considered on equitable grounds, he would have the option of claiming the continuation of the bet, after B has forfeited his deal."

Clay's opinion clearly assumes that the bet was made not on the next odd trick, but on the result of the deal in progress; and, that deal having proved abortive, the bet is null and void.

The referees were unanimous that A does not win; for the fact of B's making a misdeal does not lose him the odd trick. If it did, and B's adversaries were at four, B would lose the game, which is absurd. B cannot lose, nor can A win, until an odd trick has been played for.

The question then resolves itself into this:—Is the bet off, or is it decided by the result of the next deal?

In the Author's judgment, the case can only be decided on a report of the exact words made use of when the bet was proposed and accepted. Assuming, as the case is stated, that the exact words made use of are quoted, the Author would hold that the bet is on the next odd trick, irrespective of whose deal it is. B, when he has the deal, backs himself to win the odd trick. If he misdeals it is his fault, and the Author cannot see that his misdealing ought to relieve him of the bet. If the terms of the bet had been "I back the deal for the trick," and the dealer misdeals, the bet is off, as the deal on which the bet was made is never completed, and consequently the result of it can never be ascertained.

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#### TIME FOR CORRECTING A RENOUNCE IN ERROR.

LAW 85.—Any one during the play of a trick, or after the four cards are played, and before, but not after, they are touched for the purpose of gathering them together, may demand that the cards be placed before their respective players.

LAW 73 AND 76.—A revoke is established if the trick in which it occurs be turned and quitted.

If a player discover his mistake in time to save a revoke, the adversaries may call the card played in error, or may require him to play [*i.e.*, to follow suit with] his highest or lowest card.

*Case.*—A B are partners against Y Z. Y leads, the others play, one or more of them not following suit. B wins the trick, and A gathers it; but, before turning it, feeling uncertain whether he has renounced or not, says, “Partner, what was led?”

Y Z object that, under Law 85, A is too late, the trick being gathered, and consequently that the question must not be replied to.

*Decision.*—On the case being referred to the Author, he decided that the question was put in an improper form. A has no right to ask what was led (*i.e.*, what card was led), but, being in time to save a revoke, he is entitled to be informed what suit was led. If Y Z are *bona fide* under the impression that A wishes a card to be placed, they may object that he is too late. But on A's explaining that he only desires to ascertain whether he has followed suit, Y Z are bound to permit A to be informed as to the suit led.

To this it was objected that, the cards played being of different suits, A, by being informed what suit was led, and knowing who had won the trick, would (or might) hence obtain the same in-



formation as though the cards were placed. This is true; but the Author maintained that it does not invalidate A's right to save a revoke, if in the course of obtaining information in order to avoid the revoke penalty he gains collateral information to which he is not directly entitled.

The Author's correspondents not being satisfied, he had recourse to Clay, who wrote as follows:—

“I have no doubt your decision is correct. The ground for my opinion is that the laws have always been very tender in respect of revokes, the mistake being of easy occurrence, and the penalty very severe. There is, no doubt, no law strictly applicable to this particular case; nor can there be a special law for the many similar cases which may easily occur; but the case is clearly within the indulgence which the law extends to revokes.”

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#### DISPUTED MISDEAL.

LAW 44.—It is a misdeal [*i.e.*, the dealer loses his deal] should the dealer deal two cards at once, or two cards to the same hand, and then deal a third.

LAW 37.—There must be a new deal [*i.e.*, the same dealer deals again] if any card excepting the last be faced in the pack.

*Case.*—The dealer deals, or is alleged to have dealt, two cards to one hand, and one to the next hand, and the adversaries claim a misdeal. The dealer denies having dealt two cards together, and, as no one is allowed to count the cards during a deal, he continues his deal. He then comes to a faced card, and claims a fresh deal.

What is the law?

*Decision.*—The case was sent to the Author, who decided that the deal is only allowed to proceed in order to settle a question of fact, by seeing, at the end of the hand, whether the cards come right. The appearance of the faced card puts an end to the deal, and the adversaries are thus balked of one mode of establishing the fact of a misdeal. But they cannot be thereby estopped from any other satisfactory mode of proof. They are at liberty, after the deal is put an end to by the appearance of the faced card, to count the hands, and if one hand has a card too many they prove the fact alleged, and establish a misdeal.

This ruling was not approved of, as appears from the letter which follows:—

“Will you kindly grant a rehearing of the case? I argue that, from there being a faced card in the pack, the deal is absolutely and *ab initio* void, and not only voidable. It is void for all purposes, as well for establishing a misdeal as for making a

valid deal, and was void at the moment the misdeal was made."

On receiving this the Author, as he always did when in difficulties, resorted to Clay. Clay wrote:—

"The case of misdeal is curious, but I am not shaken in my opinion [by the letter forwarded]. The cards, to my thinking, must be taken to be in every respect right until proved to be wrong. The dealer forfeits the deal previous to any such proof, and, in a similar case, a player dishonestly inclined might face a card in the pack in order to avoid forfeiture which he knows himself to have incurred.

"Your answer is perfect and lawyer-like."

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#### CONSULTATION BETWEEN PARTNERS.

LAW 84.—Where a player and his partner have an option of exacting from their adversaries one of two penalties, they should agree who is to make the election, but must not consult with one another which of the two penalties it is advisable to exact; if they do so consult they lose their right [to demand any penalty].

LAW 62.—If any player lead out of turn, his adversaries may either call the card erroneously led, or may call a suit.

*Case.*—A leads out of turn. Y (an adversary) says to his partner, "Shall we call a suit?" Y's partner makes no answer. A says, "You have consulted." Y denies that it is a consultation, as his partner made no answer.

*Decision.*—"Y has 'consulted' his partner. An answer is not necessary to make a consultation; but if it were, *silence is an answer*. The knowledge that his partner is indifferent might have been of value to Y, and might have been precisely the kind of knowledge that he had no right to extract."

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#### RUBBER PAID FOR WHEN NOT WON.

*Case.*—A B play against Y Z. A B win a single. Only one game is played. Y Z say, "We lose four points." Four points are paid, and two of the players cut out. Presently it is discovered that Y Z have only lost one game. A B admit the fact, and offer to play out the rubber on the first convenient opportunity.

The case happened in this way. A single was left up by mistake from the previous rubber. The first game of the following rubber was a very long one, and, at its conclusion, A B innocently received the points as though they had won the rubber.

Ought A B's offer to reopen the rubber to be accepted?



*Decision*—The Author answered his correspondent to the following effect:—

It is too late to reopen the rubber. Y Z could scarcely avail themselves of A B's offer without introducing a give-and-take system, which is sure to end unsatisfactorily. However hard the case, play the strict game. Extreme inconvenience would result if the rule were that rubbers once concluded could be reopened. Fancy being reminded that the day before yesterday you marked honors when not entitled, and that you won the rubber in consequence, and then being requested to sit down and play it out!

The above decision was by no means generally agreed to. Several players of repute thought that A B's offer ought to be accepted.

Under these circumstances the Author sent the case to Clay, with the request, "Will you be so good as to give your opinion whether Y Z should accept A B's offer or not?"

Clay wrote:—

"Y Z appear to make,—and can have,—no claim. The question put to me is one of morals, not of law.

"It may be that my moral perceptions are less acute than my legislative instincts. At any rate, I shall not find fault with Y Z whether they accept or refuse the offer made to them.

"In my own case I did decline with thanks the

courteous proposal of A B, on the ground that the original mistake was mine, and that I was content to pay for it."

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PLAYER CALLED ON NOT TO WIN THE TRICK.

*Case.*—A leads a small heart; Y plays a small one; B plays the ten; Z (fourth hand) says "Small one."

A (suspecting that Z has made a mistake, and that he can win the ten), says, "Don't win it."

Is A entitled to this penalty?

*Decision.*—"Of course Z would have done better to play his card in the usual way, and to say nothing about it.

"Equally, of course, although the definition of a 'small one' is nowhere laid down, it must be taken in this case to mean a lower card than the ten. Still, the term is so vague, and the observation so much in accord with things constantly, if carelessly, said at whist, that, if cases like this are to be punished, the game would become a painful labor.

"The advantage to be gained by Z's partner is too small to call for severity, for if Z, after his observation, should take the trick, he cannot be sure that Z had not mistaken the suit on the table when he made his observation, and this indeed would be the most likely explanation of it.

"Supposing this to have been so, and Z can-

not help taking the trick, what is to be done then?

“Many other inconveniences are also possible from an imposition in this case.

“Take the following. A friend of mine,—a very charming player, but of a jocose disposition,—is constantly in the habit, when his adversary plays a king, of saying, before playing his own card,—‘I have a small one for that,’ and thereupon produces the ace. Are you to pounce upon him, directly he has fired off his little joke, and say, ‘Don’t take the trick’?

“On the whole, therefore, I am of opinion that A cannot claim his penalty; though I am somewhat reluctant to give an opinion, which may appear to sanction some laxity.”

When Clay first sent the Author this decision, he was rash enough to dissent from it. Indeed, the case is admitted by Clay himself to be one of doubt, for he wrote elsewhere, “I made up my mind the other way about this case yesterday, but on further thought have altered my opinion.”

More experience in deciding cases has convinced the Author that Clay’s decision, as printed above, is right.

## DISPUTED REVOKE.

*Case.*—A takes the twelfth trick by trumping, and claims game. The adversaries admit the claim and throw down their cards. A lowers his remaining card, but does not quit it. The adversaries then observe that A could have followed suit to the previous trick, and claim a revoke.

A pleads that as the trick is not turned and quitted, and as neither he nor his partner has played again, he is in time to correct his error.

*Decision.*—"The revoke is not complete. It of course makes no difference whether the mistake occurred in the last two cards or earlier in the hand.

"In this case the adversary found out the mistake by seeing the card left in the claimant's hand. But I don't see that this makes any difference. The adversary should have been sharp enough *not* to find out the mistake until the claimant had done some act,—which he would have done in a few seconds,—completing the revoke.

"If I was in time to find out my own error, and correct it, the adversary cannot limit this time by finding out my mistake for me.

"I attach no value to the last card being so exposed that any one could see it.



"If the claimant had gone so far as to take down his score, and score up the game, I might consider the revoke complete. I don't feel sure."

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#### PLAYER MIXING A TRICK WITH HIS HAND.

*Case.*—A, having gathered a trick, instead of placing it on the table before him, put it, in a fit of absence, into his hand.

What is the penalty?

*Decision.*—"The decision in this case comes under the class of fancy decisions, to which you can hardly apply any known law, and as to which it is not necessary to be pedantically strict, seeing that no man can repeat his offence, even occasionally, without coming under social penalties, which laws, such as ours, cannot lay down,—still less enforce.

"I should, therefore, decide that, if the offender can establish by the assent of his adversaries, or by the evidence of bystanders, the four cards which he wrongfully took in his hand, he may be permitted to do so without penalty, and, for this purpose, he may be allowed to show, or name the cards, although they may be four of eight cards turned and quitted.

"If, however, his adversaries deny his accuracy, and he has no evidence to prove it, he must submit to the loss of the game. I see no other suf-

ficient penalty,—and serve him right for making such a —— muddle.”

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### Re-LEADING AND DEALING OUT OF TURN.

When the present Laws of Whist were under discussion, Clay wrote to the Author as follows about the laws of leading and dealing out of turn. The Author cannot call to mind precisely the original point, having unfortunately mislaid the letter:—

“August 9, 1863.

“DEAR JONES,—I agree *very* nearly with all you say. Your principle that a man is bound to take reasonable care,—especially of his own property,—is in accordance with old and sound decisions. There are to my mind, however, a few exceptions,—where a trap may be so easily set that it requires unusual vigilance not to fall into it.

“On this ground it is that I have always decided,—mind, in these cases there is practically no penalty for setting the trap,—that if a man leads out of his turn, the cards of those who follow him are not liable to be called. I suppose the case of leading a card which may be called and no harm done.

“I think the dealing out of turn comes under this exception. If a man puts the cards in the

wrong place it is 100 to 1 that he may deal out of his turn next time without being found out.

“Yours very truly,

“JAMES CLAY.”

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### IS A LOWERED HAND LIABLE TO BE CALLED?

LAW 56.—All exposed cards are liable to be called. The following are exposed cards:—I. Two or more cards played at once. II. Any card dropped with its face upwards or in any way exposed on or above the table.

LAW 58.—If a player, under the impression that game is lost or won, throw his cards on the table face upwards, such cards are exposed, and liable to be called.

LAW 60.—A card detached from the rest of the hand so as to be named, is liable to be called.

The Author was looking on at Whist at the Portland when his father, thinking the game could not be saved, lowered his cards and was about to throw them down, but his partner checked him, believing that the game might be saved, as in fact it might. It was admitted that every one saw the lowered cards, and the adversaries thereupon required them to be laid on the table to be called. They were laid on the table, and called, and the game was lost.

After it was all over, the Author told his father

that he need not have submitted to the call, as there is no penalty for lowering the hand. This remark being overheard, a lively discussion ensued, and, thinking the case of some importance, the Author published his opinion in *The Field*.

Little did he dream of the hornet's nest he had brought about his ears. "Mogul," an excellent player and admirable judge of the laws, regarded his opinion as "extraordinary." He thought that, if a man intending to let all the players see his cards, deliberately lowers them until clearly visible to all, they are exposed under the words of Law 56, par. II., "or *in any way* exposes them," and that the fact of the cards being retained in his hand does not alter the fact that the cards are exposed above the table. "Mogul" held, therefore, that lowered cards are liable to be called, unless some other law distinctly says that cards held in the hand, though exposed, are not liable.

"Mogul" also put these cases to demonstrate the absurdity of the Author's view:—A player holding six cards separates five of them and lowers them. These are detached cards, and can be called if named. But if he commits a greater offence, and shows all six cards together, by lowering his hand, none of them can be called. If, in fact, he lowers them one by one they can be called; but not if he lowers them all together.

Again, if a player says or implies that he has



a card in his hand, it is constructively exposed, and can be called ; but when he actually shows it with the rest of his hand it cannot be called.

“Lincoln’s Inn,” also an excellent judge of the game and of its laws, agreed with “Mogul,” and added that he considered lowered cards to be cards exposed “above” the table. Also, that the words “in any way exposed” must have a meaning ; and the meaning he contended for is that these words apply to cards which are exposed otherwise than as specifically stated in the other clauses relating to exposure.

To these arguments the Author replied as follows :—

The words “in any way exposed” do not define exposure. They merely state, in a roundabout way, that exposure is exposure. Melted butter is butter in any way melted ; an exposed ankle is an ankle in any way exposed ; and so exposed cards are cards in any way exposed.

The word “above” is introduced to meet the case of a card which leaves the player’s hand above the table, but is recovered by him before it touches the table, a case I have seen more than once. It has never been “on” the table, but has been, technically, exposed above it.

The law having defined exposed cards as cards *dropped* face upwards on or above the table, says by implication that if cards are not dropped, but

merely lowered without being abandoned, they are not technically exposed ; and hence a lowered hand may be raised to its usual position without penalty.

The reason the law does not seek to exact a penalty for lowering the hand is to my mind clear. To bring an offender within the pale of the law he must do some irregular act which can be clearly defined. For instance, he must drop a card, or detach a card. These are acts about which there can be no dispute as to the fact. But when it comes to be a question at what precise angle a man may or may not hold his cards (this question being involved in lowering the hand), the law, wisely as I think, determines not to interfere. Imagine the law to be that a player lowering his hand so that his partner can see it, is liable to have his cards called. Such a law would give rise to endless disputes as to whether the hand was so lowered that the partner could see the cards.

The Author's opinion being much opposed, he sought, as usual, when criticised, to strengthen it by obtaining Clay's decision. Clay wrote as under:—

“You ask my opinion as to whether a player at Whist, holding his hand so low that it can be seen by the other players, is liable to have his cards called under the laws, whether directly or by implication, which affect exposed cards.

“Whether a hand so lowered as you describe should be liable to be called, is a question which I have always considered very debatable. I was, however, and am still of opinion that these cards should not be treated as exposed cards, for the following reason:—

“When the law inflicts any penalty for an offence at cards, it is desirable that the act to be punished should be clear and beyond doubt. Thus, for example, throwing down the cards on the table is an act as to which no dispute of fact can arise. So also, in the case of a separated card, the fact of the separation is required to be proved, and can be proved, by the naming of the card separated. In the case of a lowered hand, the question of degree is introduced, that is to say, how much or how little the hand has been lowered, and it is a question which it may be often very difficult to settle. Thus, a player may say to his opponent, I shall call your cards, for every one can see your hand.’ To which the reply may be, ‘My partner cannot. Why do you look over my hand?’ Indeed, in the old days of duelling, I recollect a serious quarrel resulting from the above occurrence.

“I may be told then that, whenever it is of great importance to a player that his partner should know his cards, and of no great consequence that they should be seen by his adversa-

ries, he may, by lowering his cards, give this information, and be subject to no penalty. But this is not so. There are many offences at cards, and those the most serious, against which no laws can be framed, because the offence is very difficult of proof, and because, if proved, the only proper punishment would be expulsion from the society in which it was committed.

“A good instance of this class of offence is the case of a player who looks over his neighbor's hand. What offence can be graver? Yet no penalty can be attached to it. By inadvertence, any man may, once in a way, direct his eyes to an opponent's hand; but, if he does it frequently, you cease to play with him.

“To this class of offences, in so far as regards the imposition of a penalty, I consider the lowering of cards to belong.

“JAMES CLAY.”





# CARD-TABLE TALK



## CARD-TABLE TALK.

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“ I knew one was wont to say in scorn, ‘ He must needs be a wise man, he speaks so much of himself.’ ”

—*Essays, Of Discourse*, by FRANCIS BACON.

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NOTHING can be more opposed to fact than the popular idea that men who indulge in “ Play ” are a set of selfish brutes, constantly trying to get the best of each other. This may be true of low sharpers ; but is not even faintly applicable to members of respectable play-clubs.

Thackeray is probably responsible for the false notions entertained by some respecting club card-rooms. In my humble opinion he took far too cynical a view of human nature. He could see the bad side but not the good. As regards card-players he is preposterously in the wrong. Of course, where several hundred men are banded together, it will necessarily happen that all are not of equal moral worth. But the black sheep are as well known in clubs as objectionable people are in general society. And, since they



cannot be removed from the club, unless they do something very flagrant, they are tolerated and disliked.

The vast majority of "play" men exhibit, as a rule, many admirable qualities. The nicest sense of honor, the most elegant courtesies of civilized life, good fellowship, self-control under trying circumstances, these and many other virtues are as common in the card-room as gooseberries on a bush.

The green cloth lays bare a man's true character very readily. I am happy to think that I have formed many most sincere and lasting friendships at the card-table. And it has been my privilege to know the fine feelings and the sterling good qualities of my play friends to a degree which would have been seldom possible in the case of others; for they were revealed to me in the card-room, which is a very Castle of Truth for those who choose to frequent it, with their eyes and ears open.

One of these friends was—JAMES CLAY. He was an old associate of my father's, and consequently I knew him before having the privilege of being admitted a member of the Portland Club.

Till then he had inspired me with a feeling of boyish awe, as being the greatest of living Whist-players; and, when I first played with him, must

admit I was half afraid of him. But he soon put me at my ease.

It was not long before he found out that I had made a study of the laws of games. I need hardly add that we discussed Whist and its laws frequently and freely.

The next step was that he, my senior, and the undisputed Chancellor of the Whist-Table, paid, me the high compliment of consulting me in difficult cases that were submitted to him for decision. As Jeames says in his "Diary," "Phansy my phelinx!"

When "The Laws of Short Whist," \* edited by Mr. Baldwin, were under consideration, Clay, who was Chairman of the Committee that framed the Code, several times did me the honor of asking my opinion, although I was not a member of the Committee. I may, without egotism, assume that Clay thought my judgment worth something, or he would not have troubled to write to me as follows:—

"Brighton and Sussex Club,

"Aug. 12, 1863.

"MY DEAR JONES,—I am beginning to waver in my opinion as to the substitution of 'touched' for 'taken up and looked at' [in the laws relating to dealing]. There is much to be said for the

\* New York: Henry Holt & Co.

change. *Many persons think that the law is so at present.* It would be a great gain to keep every one's hands off the table. Nothing is easier than to leave a thing alone. It would prevent interruptions to the dealer and unfair tricks with the cards. Look at this case. I have seen it more than once. The dealer is dealing your hand and mine pretty close together. He has dealt one of my cards in an uncertain position—equidistant from either hand. I immediately draw my cards towards me. The position of the card is no longer uncertain. It is close to your cards and distant from mine. Long odds you take it up, and your partner has lost his deal. I am disposed to be severe on 'traps' which there is no penalty for setting, and to avoid falling into which more than ordinary care is required. A game is not tolerable if more than reasonable care is required. Why! I can't look round to bet, or take 5 to 2 from a bystander, or make civil answer to a question, if my eyes, even during the deal, are to be always on the watch. The point is not yet finally decided, though the majority is for the change. What say you to the foregoing arguments in its favor?

"Yours very truly,

"JAMES CLAY."

I have several similar letters, *e. g.* :—

Feb. 20. 67

My dear Son,

The decision is improved  
by explaining, as you propose,  
"It is a question of fact". It is  
no part of your duty to say  
how that fact is to be ascertained,  
how and by what means "the  
conscience of the player" forms  
fact of accident.

---

Yrs ever truly

James Clay

H. Jones Jr Esq.



“Feb. 20, 1867.

“MY DEAR JONES,—The decision is improved by beginning as you propose. ‘It is a question of fact.’ It is no part of your duty to say how that fact is to be ascertained. Leave out by all means ‘the conscience of the player,’ *for fear of accidents.*

“Yours very truly,

“JAMES CLAY.”

Of course we became very intimate, and my attachment for Clay was constantly augmented by kindnesses I shall never forget. I will mention some instances:—

When I was a mere boy Clay thought proper to caution me against plunging. Maybe I had been betting; I do not remember. But I do recollect saying I never backed myself for any sum worth mentioning unless I had been winning, and the loser invited me to give him a chance of getting it back. Clay concluded the conversation by saying, “Never win too much of a man at one sitting.”

Again: An Elderly Gentleman, my adversary, opened a hand at Whist by leading queen, holding only queen and one small one. He lost the odd trick owing to the original lead being from a weak suit, when I said to my partner, “That was a very good example of the disadvantage of open-

ing a weak suit. Had Mr. —— (the E. G.) led his strong suit originally, we must have lost the trick." On which the following conversation ensued:—

*The E. G.*—"What did you say? That I lost the odd trick by my bad play?"

*Ego.*—"I wasn't speaking to you."

*The E. G.* (indignantly).—"You were speaking *at* me, and you said I lost the odd trick by leading queen of diamonds. I had so and so"—(here he detailed his hand)—"and with such cards I lead a strengthening card. What do you say to that?"

*Ego* (sarcastically).—"Oh, yes! I know! Queen and another is a favorite Portland lead."

This was a severe thrust at the E. G., who was a great man at the Portland. Abuse his dear Portland Club, the Temple of Whist, and to think that I, a mere boy, could know as well as an experienced Portlander! Absurd! Impertinent! This was, no doubt, what the E. G. thought, not what he said. What he did was, as soon as he could, to retire in a dignified manner from the table.

Now there is nothing seriously offensive in my observation. The most that can be said is, I was not sufficiently respectful, considering the difference in our ages, and possibly my tone and manner might have contributed to irritate the E. G.

At all events, he would not speak to me afterwards, and would not cut in with me.

The dissension came to Clay's ears, and he, at once, of his own motion set to work to put matters straight. After privately hearing the E. G.'s story from him, and my version from me, Clay told me I ought to eat humble pie. This I at first declined to do, urging that I had been guilty of no offence. Clay, however, insisted that, being the junior, I ought to give way, and added, *apropos* of the humble pie, "I will cut the slice so thin for you that you will hardly be able to taste it." I then allowed Clay to dictate a conciliatory letter. A day or two afterwards I received the following from him:—

"MY DEAR JONES,—I have sent your letter to ———, and with it the best letter I could think of from myself. He is considering the matter,—which to my mind requires no consideration,—and if he does not answer you cordially, I shall think him very wrong. But we must remember that he is as obstinate as you are. I dare say you both call it 'firmness.'

"Yours very truly,

"JAMES CLAY."

The result was eminently satisfactory to all parties.

One more reminiscence of Clay's kindness. He spent hours and hours with me, when he could ill afford it (his time being fully occupied with parliamentary duties), in assisting me with various books. My *Écarté*, and especially *Piquet* are much indebted to him. It was mainly through his support that my *Laws of Piquet*, or rather his and mine, were adopted by the Portland Club.

A committee was formed finally to revise the *Piquet Laws*. I pressed him to allow his name to be put on the Committee. For some days he refused on the ground of want of time. But I eventually persuaded him to act, by pointing out the great value that would accrue to the laws if his name were appended to them.

It was, of course, important to get the sanction of the Turf Club to the *Piquet Laws*. And here Clay's name was all-powerful. Their adoption was proposed at a General Meeting of the Turf Club. This was carried, and the laws were agreed to *en bloc*, chiefly, as I was afterwards informed by Mr. Baldwin, because they were approved by Clay.

Our friendship continued uninterruptedly until, at last, poor dear Clay was stricken with paralysis. Even then he did not lose his cheerfulness, and his head remained clear throughout. I saw him for the last time about a week before his death. We talked Whist, and he gave me his



opinion on some point of play, and added that, if he could only get on his legs again, he would be able to play Whist as well as ever.

When the end came the world lost a Whist genius, and I lost what can never be replaced—a true friend.

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I am often asked my opinion of Clay's play.

In the first place, what particularly struck me was the extreme brilliancy of his game. Of this, the following coup played by him is, to my thinking, a beautiful illustration.

The cards lie thus:—Clay has knave, eight, four of clubs (trumps); and ace, king, and two small diamonds. Diamonds have never been led. There are three other trumps in, viz., nine, six, and three, and they are all in the hand to Clay's right. This is certain, as the other players have not followed suit in trumps.

Clay has the lead, and requires every trick to save the game.

It is clear that, if his right-hand adversary plays properly, that player must eventually make a trick in trumps. It is also demonstrable that if Clay makes the usual lead of king and ace of diamonds, the right-hand adversary must make a trick.

In this position I venture to say that ninety-

nine players—and good players—out of a hundred would lead king of diamonds, which is the book play. Not so Clay. He observes that his only chance is to depart from rule. He must put the lead into his partner's hand, find him with a forcing card, and the right-hand adversary must make the mistake of trumping it. Clay, therefore, throws rule altogether aside, and leads a small diamond, as though he were playing dummy, and saw the cards in his partner's hand.

Clay's partner wins with knave, and leads the best spade, which is trumped. Clay overtrumps, and then leads *another small diamond*, to endeavor to put the lead again into his partner's hand. His partner wins this trick also, and leads a winning card, which the adversary again trumps, is overtrumped, has his last trump drawn, and the ace and king of diamonds make.

The hands are subjoined, as it is not easy to appreciate the coup from mere description:—

A.—CLAY.	Y.	B.	Z.
Knv. 8, 4... ♣	5, 4..... ♠	10, 9, 6.... ♠	9, 6, 3.... ♣
Ace, Kg, 5, 2 ♦	6, 5..... ♥	Qn, Knv. 6, 3 ♦	Qn, 3.... ♥
	8, 7, 4.... ♦		10, 9..... ♦

Take another example. When a youngster I was looking over Clay, and late in the hand he led queen from queen, knave, nine, and a small card. This was the old-fashioned lead; but a

small card is now led from queen, knave, nine, etc. I afterwards asked Clay whether he considered the old lead, as given by Hoyle, preferable to the modern one. He said, "No; I generally lead the small one; but when I had the lead, the cards must lie lucky for us or we lose the odd trick." By this he meant that, unless the king lay to his left or the ten to his right, and one of the finesses succeeded, the odd trick could not be won.

I have won many an odd trick since by acting on a similar principle, and always think of Clay when it comes off.

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In the second place, though no one knew better than Clay when to depart from rule, no one was more regular in his observance of rule. He combined the carefulness of the old school with the dash and brilliancy of the new.

Whist-players owe more to Clay than to any other man, in consequence of his educating his generation to adhere to rule. He taught his contemporaries the advantage of playing on system. The game has developed since his day, and I am bold enough to hold the opinion that there are, now living, better players than he ever was. But he, by his example, showed them how to become better players. There are many men, at the present day, who know more mathematics than New-

ton ever did ; but Newton showed them the way. Or, *magna componere parvis*, there are now finer billiard-players than old John Roberts ever was, but he was the billiard genius whom they have all copied, and from whom they drew their inspiration. Cook would never have made a break of 936, had not Roberts, by his teaching, paved the way for him.

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As to Clay's manner of playing. I have heard him called a slow player. That, however, is hardly correct. He should rather have been called a deliberate player. His system was to play every card at the same pace. Hesitation is often to the player's disadvantage ; and Clay's object, in playing deliberately, was that his pause, when doubtful as to the correct play, should not be taken for hesitation, but should be attributed to his natural habit of machine-like play.

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There was one exception to this habit of playing deliberately. Clay seldom played a card contrary to rule in order to take in the adversary, or, as it is technically called, a false card. To quote his own words :—

“I hold in abhorrence the playing false cards. I freely admit that to this practice there is great and frequent temptation ; \* \* \* for there is great



enjoyment, when your trick succeeds, in having taken in your adversary, and having won the applause of an ignorant gallery, while, if you have played in the commonplace way, even your partner scarcely thanks you. You have done your duty, nothing more—and he had a right to expect it of you. \* \* \* I do not, however, go the length of saying that false cards should never be played, but I prescribe to myself, and advise to you, the following limits to the practice.”

The limits laid down by Clay were as follows:—You are justified in playing false, with a partner so bad that regularity in your play affords him no information; or, when your partner is so weak all round that you can do no harm by deceiving him; or, in the last three or four tricks of the hand, when if your partner holds a particular card you attain the result you desire, and, if not, your deceiving him is of no consequence; or, when the so-called false card is false as against the adversary but not as against the partner.

I have been tempted to make this digression respecting false cards, because the case, as put by Clay, is so well worth studying.

To return:—Clay played, as a rule, deliberately. But, when he played a false card, he got his card ready before it was his turn to play.

No doubt he thought that if he appeared to hesitate, he might be suspected of a false card,

and therefore prepared to play rather more quickly than was his wont.

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Clay was fond of shuffling the cards very thoroughly after every deal. Having suggested to him that so much shuffling was likely to produce wild hands, which are disadvantageous to good players, he said, "I do not agree with you at all. I should like to have the cards thrown out of a volcano after every deal."

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Clay, though as a rule agreeable at the table, could say a severe thing when addressed by men he disliked. Some of his *mots* on these occasions are well worth recording.

Under the name of "Castlemaine," Clay is described in *Sans Merci*, as also his manner to "men whom he favored not." The incident alluded to is, of course, that of his playing Whist with Vincent Flemyng, when the latter, having backed himself heavily because he had a "tower of strength" for a partner, lost the rubber by not leading trumps from five trumps to an honor.

Flemyng's query to Clay, and Clay's reply about the eleven thousand young Englishmen who would not lead trumps from five, and their consequent condition of peripatetic impecuniosity, are well known, but the passage will nevertheless bear quotation.

“Vincent held the knave and four more trumps. If he had only gone off with that suit the game was over. \* \* \* True he had not a very powerful hand \* \* \* so he led off with his own strongest suit, which was trumped by Hardress the second round \* \* \* and the critical fifth trick was just barely saved. \* \* \* Fleming said, ‘I ought to have led trumps; there’s no doubt of it.’ He looked at his partner [Castlemaine] as he spoke, but the latter answered never a word till Vincent repeated the question pointedly. It has been before stated, that Castlemaine’s manner to men whom he favored not was somewhat solemn and formal. ‘It has been computed,’ he said, very slowly, ‘that eleven thousand young Englishmen, once heirs to fair fortunes, are wandering about the Continent in a state of utter destitution, because they would not lead trumps with five and an honor in their hands.’ The ultra-judicial tone of the reply would have been irresistibly comic at any other time.”

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The following is a parallel to that story.

The great authority was looking on at Whist when the second player, whom he favored not, holding ace, king, knave, instead of playing king, as he should have done, finessed the knave.

The queen made, third hand; ace and king were afterwards trumped.

The player then turned to Clay and asked whether the finesse of the knave was justifiable.

To him, the following crushing rejoinder, spoken very deliberately at the wall opposite, instead of to the querist:—

“At the game of Whist, as played in England (pause), you are not called upon to win a trick (another pause), unless you please.”

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A similar anecdote of Clay got into the papers some years ago, but was incorrectly told, and was spoilt in the telling. The correct version is as under:—

A player having asked for trumps, though he did not hold a trump (a most outrageous Whist atrocity), his partner said, after the hand,—

“I presume you did not intend to ask, but pulled out a wrong card.”

“No,” was the reply, “I had a very good hand, and wanted trumps out.”

Then, turning to Clay, he inquired if, with a very good hand, his play was defensible.

Clay threw himself back in his chair and stared at the cornice in the next room. He had a long cigar cocked out of one corner of his mouth, and as he spoke, in his “ultra-judicial tone,” his voice seemed to proceed, in a most comical and indescribable manner, from behind the cigar. He said:—



"I have heard of its being done once before (pause) by a dear old friend of mine (pause)."

"And," innocently pursued the victim, "was your friend a good judge of Whist?"

"I am *bound to add*," resumed Clay, as though he had wished to conceal the fact, but that the recital of it was wrung from him by this question, "I am bound to add, that he died shortly afterwards (pause, then very distinctly) in—a—lunatic-asylum!"

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Clay was once lamenting to me the number of erroneous decisions he had known to be given with regard to the Laws of Whist. I said,—

"I don't see what you can do further than refer the case to the best judge in the room, and go by his decision, right or wrong."

"I think a better plan would be," replied Clay, to ask the best judge in the room what ought to be done, and then to do just the contrary. You will generally be right."

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Lord Henry Bentinck was another player, of the past generation, of very high repute.

At the time referred to many of the best players of the day belonged to the Portland Club, where Lord Henry usually played. He, with perhaps a pardonable feeling of superiority than excellence gives, was not very willing to admit fine play on

the part of his *confrères*, and especially on the part of Clay.

He was no doubt a fine player, but *tenax propositi* to a degree that militated against very perfect Whist. For instance, when he had made up his mind not to be forced in trumps, I have seen him allow a whole suit to be brought in against him rather than take the force.

Again, he made no distinction between partners, playing the same game with a good as with a bad one, whereas players of the highest class vary their game to suit their partners.

His strong point was his accurate observance of the fall of the cards. He was very particular about the play of the small cards, and this, no doubt, led him to conceive the idea of the call for trumps, which was his invention (see Clay's "Short Whist," pp. 100, 101).

The following is an instance of his regard for small cards. A newly-elected member of a Whist club, whose reputation as a player had preceded him, on sitting down to a rubber there for the first time, was looked over by Lord Henry and another member, Col. F——. After a hand or two, the new-comer having queen, nine, eight, six of one suit, and queen, nine, eight, three of another, led originally from the latter. The rule being to lead the strongest suit, and the six being a higher card than the three, in strictness the former suit should

be opened, though in actual play it is all but immaterial which suit is chosen.

Immediately after this, Lord Henry walked away from the table, with an air that betokened he had seen enough. He was followed by Col. F——, who asked him what he thought of Mr. N——'s play.

"They told me he could play Whist," softly replied that sarcastic nobleman.

---

When his partner, I took care he should have all the information about small cards that could be given, as witness this hand, which we played together:—

He leads a trump. The second hand plays the six. I hold the five, the four, and the three. To the first round I play the five; to the second, the three, thus showing that I hold the four, as no Whist-player plays a high card when a lower will do as well. This was before the echo of the call had been invented. The hand continued, and it soon transpired that there were four honors against us. My partner having the lead, and knowing me still to hold a small trump, and that I was able to ruff a suit, forced me, instead of leading a third round of trumps, as he would otherwise have done. The trick made by the force eventually enabled us to save the game.

It was this kind of attention to details that pleased Lord Henry, and unless such minutiae were kept in view, he would not concede any merit to his partner's play.

In consequence, I believe, of this coup,—if coup it can be called,—Lord Henry paid me what he evidently meant for a compliment. Bushe, better known as Johnny Bushe, a fine player, and one of the most charming men that ever entered a card-room, told me he asked Lord Henry, whom he considered the best Whist-player in the Portland Club. “They none of them know anything about it,” replied he, in his peculiarly gentle and biting manner, “but I fancy young Jones is less ignorant of the game than most of the members.”

Considering that at the time Clay, Col. Pipon, Petrie, Major Adams, Hermann, Storey, and a dozen others almost as good, whose names do not at the present moment occur to me, were then habitual players at the Portland, this criticism amused Bushe immensely, as was evident from the *gusto* with which he used to relate the story.

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In addition to his accurate observation of the fall of the cards, Lord Henry had one great virtue as a Whist-player—a virtue that might, with advantage, be cultivated more than it is—he never lectured his partner. If you did not discuss the



game with him, he did not discuss it with you. If you asked him a question you got an answer, generally a cynical one. It was your own fault; you brought it upon yourself.

Acting on this experience, I generally played a silent rubber with him, except to inquire whether he had a card of the suit led when he renounced. On one occasion, however, I departed from this rule.

My hand was ace and a small spade; king, ten, and two small hearts (trumps); queen, and two small clubs; and knave, ten, nine, and a small diamond.

I led knave of diamonds. Queen was put on second hand; king, third hand; ace, fourth hand.

The club was then led through me. I called for trumps. The second round of clubs my partner won with king; I completed the call.

Lord Henry did not lead a trump, but returned the diamond suit. I, thinking he had no trump, played a very cautious game, and lost the odd trick. Had my partner led a trump, we should have won two or three by cards. After the hand:—

*Ego.*—I called for trumps, Lord Henry.

*Lord H.*—You can't call for trumps after you have had the lead and not led a trump.

Now, of course, it was no use arguing; so I let the matter drop. The proposition, however, is a

monstrous one from a Whist point of view. I am not strong enough to start with a trump; but my suit being established the first round, and being protected everywhere, a trump is obviously the lead for us.

The hand is also a good illustration of Lord Henry's style of play. It is a certainty that he saw the call, and knew that my suit was established; but because he had a crotchet that you can't call for trumps after you have had the lead and have not led a trump, he ignored the call and chose to play what he considered the game.

---

Those who are not Whist-players may require to be informed that calling for trumps,—the strongest intimation a player can give his partner that he wants a trump led,—is accomplished by playing an unnecessarily high card before a low one. It indicates very great strength in trumps, a minimum of five trumps with one honor, or of four trumps with two honors. It is often called an invitation to lead trumps; but it is more than this—it is a royal invitation—a command.

Students of Clay will observe that I called for trumps with less than the recognized minimum of four trumps two honors. But it must be borne in mind that general rules only apply to an *original* call, not necessarily to a call late in a hand. An original call means four trumps two honors, or five

trumps one honor as a minimum, with other good cards in hand. But the opportunity of leading trumps, or of calling for them once passed, and then a call being made, means, the fall of the cards has shown that a trump lead would be very advantageous. The caller has a very good hand, and such strength in trumps that, considering what cards are out, partner's strengthening card from three trumps, or a small one from four, will probably land him in a great score.

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It may be interesting to record Lord Henry's opinion of the comparative values of the scores of three and four at Short Whist.

To non-players it may be premised that there are many who prefer the score of three to that of four, because at three honors can be counted, but at four they cannot. On the question being discussed before Lord Henry, he epigrammatically observed, "I have yet to learn that holding three honors is any bar to winning the odd trick."

This puts the whole case in a nutshell.

---

The players of the old school, who learnt their Whist at Graham's, held book-whist in great contempt, and had a way of saying, "Whist cannot be learnt from books."

It is true that to become thoroughly conversant with the refinements of Whist, frequent practice

with good players is essential. But a would-be player who begins practising with a theoretical knowledge of the game, must, one would fancy, have an advantage over another, of similar capacity, who allows himself to be guided by the light of nature alone. I presume no one will contend that a sound precept, orally conveyed, is less sound when printed in a book.

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There are two books on Whist which all who wish to learn the game ought to study. I refer, of course, to "Short Whist," by James Clay, and "The Theory of Whist," by William Pole.

Clay's book is charmingly written, and may be called the most suggestive work on the subject. It is eminently graceful and readable, and calculated to make people think about Whist, if they choose to read between the lines.

The chapter, however, on intermediate sequences ought to be expunged, as it perpetuates a view which Clay afterwards relinquished.

I argued the point there discussed, with Clay, some time after the appearance of his book, and he was generous enough to admit that the penultimate lead from five-card suits (which he opposes in the chapter referred to) is right. He wound up by saying, "You have convinced me. When I play with you at the Portland I shall adopt your system."



Had Clay lived to re-edit his "Short Whist," he would certainly have advocated the penultimate lead, especially as the advantages of it were soon recognized by many players, and it is now (1879) generally adopted by club players.

Dr. Pole's "Theory of Whist" is an admirable book for beginners. It contains, particularly, the best essay extant on the reasons for leading originally from the long suit.

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Clay says: "Talking over the hand after it has been played is not uncommonly called a bad habit, and an annoyance. I am firmly persuaded that it is among the readiest ways of learning Whist, and I advise beginners, when they have not understood their partner's play, or when they think that the hand might have been differently played with a better result, to ask for information and invite discussion."

At the same time it must be admitted that many players consider it an affront to talk over a hand, especially the Nestors of the card-table, who seem to regard any inquiry—except as to whether they hold a card of the suit led when they renounce—as an imputation on their skill.

When trying to learn Whist, I once asked an old gentleman, one of the soundest players of his time, if he would explain his object in leading a certain card. I asked in a deferential manner, desiring to obtain information.

The old gentleman looked fiercely at me over his spectacles for a few moments, and then said, in an angry tone, as though I had grossly insulted him,

“Why, sir, because nobody but a born fool would have played anything else !”

No doubt some men do bore one very much by the way they criticise without rhyme or reason at the end of every hand.

One of these bores is the “if you had” partner, who constantly greets you with “If you had only done so-and-so we should have made so-and-so.”

My favorite retort to the “if you had” partner is to ask if he has ever heard the story of “your uncle and your aunt.”

If he has, he does not want to hear it again, and is silent. If he has not, and innocently falls into the trap by expressing a desire to hear it, I say, in a solemn voice,—

“If your aunt had been a man, she would have been your uncle !”

On one occasion I set down an “if you had” partner thus:—I led a small heart from ace, ten and two small ones. Queen was put on, second hand; my partner won with king and led trumps. All the trumps being out, my partner returned the nine of hearts, which I finessed. The nine won the trick, and it was now evident that I had the

tenace, in two senses, over the knave guarded, to my right hand.

My partner had no more hearts, and so could not continue the suit. He, therefore, opened his own strong suit.

I won the first trick in it, and was then in doubt whether to return his suit or to lead the ace of hearts, making a certain trick, but parting with the tenace. It was a question of judgment, depending on the score and on the exact values of the cards already played in other suits. At all events, after consideration, I deemed it better, in this particular hand, to return my partner's suit. It turned out unluckily, and at the end of the hand I was saluted with the usual "Oh! partner! if you had only led out your ace of hearts! Why didn't you?" &c., &c. I replied somewhat curtly, "I didn't know it was the best!" This answer so turned the tables on my partner that he did not "if you had" me again for some time.

---

A companion to the "if you had" player is the "it didn't matter" player.

My partner trumps my best card, or does not trump a doubtful card after I have called for trumps, or commits some other whist enormity. We win the game notwithstanding, for we have prodigious cards. If I suggest that there was no

occasion to perpetrate the enormity in question, my partner triumphantly informs me "It didn't matter."

This view is altogether fallacious. It did not *happen* to matter in that particular hand; but my confidence is impaired and it will matter in every hand I play with that partner for a long time to come.

Again: A point arises whereon my partner does not give me information by his play as to the cards he holds, when he might have done so. He then tells me he knew we had the game, so "it didn't matter."

But presently a similar point presents itself, only I cannot be sure whether my partner knows we have the game or not. I am in the dark. My partner's carelessness in the former instance prevents my drawing the inference that he cannot hold such and such cards, otherwise he would have informed me. He still continues *to think* his previous play "didn't matter." I *know* it does matter.

---

The "it didn't matter" players would do well to bear in mind a remark of Clay's to a good player who was playing his cards anyhow, because he had game in his hand and "it didn't matter."

"You might as well," said the great Whist Mas-



ter, "have played in the ordinary way *for the sake of uniformity.*"

There is more Whist-wisdom in that observation than many people would suspect.

---

To enumerate all the Whist-nuisances one meets in the course of a long experience would require a volume. The "if you had" player and the "it didn't matter" player are bad enough, but there are many much worse.

There is the gentleman (?) who whenever his partner leads a king pulls out a card, and before playing it, says, "Your king, partner?" Of course this means, "My dear sir, I have the ace."

Granting that the player in question has no sinister motive, and that he does not intentionally desire to draw his partner's attention to the fact that he can win the trick, he is a nuisance nevertheless.

---

Every one has met the player who, whenever he was about to lead trumps, draws his card and holds it by the corner face downwards on the table. He then looks his partner full in the face, and says, "What's trumps, partner?" And being replied to, he plays his card with a bang.

This being interpreted of course means "Part-

ner! I have led a trump; return it on the first opportunity."

---

Again, there is the noisy blustering fellow who leads with a bang a king, not trumps, and before it is played to draws another card, and plays again with violence, almost before the first trick (*his*, of course) is completed.

Translated into plain English this means "Attention! Here's a king, which nobody can beat. Attention! partner! Here's a trump! Get out the trumps, and return my suit, of which I hold ace queen, or ace, knave, and two or three others." Unfortunately there is no rule by which such an earthquake of a man can be prevented from having his way, as, though intimations are contrary to etiquette, it is extremely difficult—if not impossible—to define what an intimation is.

---

Then there is the player who pulls out his cards one after the other and puts them back again before he plays, and the player whose eyes are all round the table, who is humorously said to play triple dummy, and who makes wonderful and successful finesses. I have known two triple dummy players to cut as partners against an unsuspecting youth and an "old soldier." The triple-dummy partners had had a lengthy inspection of

the youth's hand, when the old soldier rather astonished them by saying, "Partner, you had better show me your hand, as both the adversaries have seen it."

---

A triple-dummy player once finessed the five of trumps against me, to his partner's original lead, he being the third player with five and king, and I being fourth player with four and ace.

On a former occasion this identical player was rather roughly handled in consequence of a similar performance. He led: my partner hesitated and at last played king second hand. The third hand played ace and returned the suit, which my partner trumped.

The adversary to my right then said, "Really, W——, it is not proper to hesitate like that when you have only one of the suit in your hand."

"I assure you," my partner replied, "I was not hesitating; I was only waiting till —— had done looking at my hand."

It is a wonder there was not a row, but —— affected to be satisfied with W——'s explanation that he was only in fun.

---

—— once did another very clever thing. He became a member of a play-club, where there was

a by-law that if honors are scored in error, the adversaries may take them down and add them to their own score.

As a new-comer he was courteously informed of the existence of this by-law.

"Excellent rule indeed," said —, "capital rule!" and sat down to play.

After a hand or two, his score being three to love, he lost two by cards, and observed, smiling to his partner, "Lucky! We *just* saved it!"

The adversaries, concluding from the remark "just saved it" that they were four, marked four, without further consideration. But as soon as the score was marked, — innocently inquired, "Were you four by cards that time?" "No, two by cards and two by honors." "Honors were divided," said — blandly, and so they were. "I think you have a very proper rule here, that under these circumstances we score two. Partner, mark a double."

---

Clay told me that when he first played Whist at a London club he was horrified to see an old gentleman deliberately looking over one of his adversaries' hands. Mr. Pacey, the player whose hand was overlooked, was, as it happened, an old friend of Clay's, and, the rubber being over, Clay took an immediate opportunity of advising him



to hold up his hand when playing against P——, adding,

"The last hand he saw every card you held."

"Oh no, he didn't!" replied Mr. Pacey, who was well aware of P——'s peculiarities, "he only saw a few I put in the corner to puzzle him!"

---

Scene, a Whist Club. *Dramatis Personæ*: Col. G. B——, Major B——.

A rubber is about to commence. The Colonel cuts in, and has the deal against him. The Major does not play, but looks on and bets.

*Major*.—I back the deal for five.

*Col*.—I take it.

The Colonel wins the first game. The Major, pursuing his usual tactics, when the side he backs is losing, immediately slopes off to another table. The Major's memory about his bets is rather uncertain.

The Colonel loses the next two games in two hands; the cards being thrown down each hand, it would seem very unlikely to any one not looking on that he could have lost the rubber so quickly.

*Col*. (calling out).—Major, that's a fiver.

*Major* (from the other end of the room).—I had no bet.

*Col*.—Yes, you had! You bet me a fiver.

*Major*.—Oh no! I had no bet.

*Col*.—But you *win* a fiver.

*Major* (brightening up). Oh yes! I recollect now. I backed the deal.

---

In most clubs there is a member who, by his habitual sadness and way of looking on the dull side of everything, earns the *sobriquet* of "Dismal Jemmy."

In a play-club the Dismal Jemmy constantly takes supposed sympathizers by the button-hole, and laments his unvarying ill-fortune.

Meeting a Dismal Jemmy in Piccadilly, one afternoon, as he was emerging from his club, after the usual greetings, I said to him,

"Well! and how have they been treating you lately?"

*Dis. J.* (with as near an approach to a smile as he ever permitted himself).—I've had the best day to-day that I've had for the last three weeks. I have only lost half-a-sovereign!

Another specimen of the Dismal Jemmy is the one who makes lugubrious efforts at being funny when recounting his sad experiences. He will solemnly tell you, for example, when he loses a rubber, that "the cards with which he can win are not yet manufactured;" he will inform you with doleful glee of the precise sum total of the points he has lost during the year, as a unique illustration of the aberrations of chance; and he will

wind up by remarking that it is fortunate he only plays for trifling stakes.

On inquiring of one of these gentlemen who take their pleasure so sadly how Fortune had been favoring him lately, he replied with a grim smile, "Oh! if I only live long enough, and my money holds out, perhaps some day my strong suit will be trumps!"

---

It is remarkable that men say the rudest things across the card-table,—things they would scarcely dare to say elsewhere,—without any offence being taken.

Sometimes, however, players rush into the opposite extreme, and take offence too readily, as in the following scene:—

*D.*—I lead you a trump originally, and you will *not* return it (resignedly); of course, we must lose!

*B.* (meekly).—That was my view of the game.

*D.* (firing off what he means for a joke).—I hardly think it amounts to a "view."

*D*—— and *B*—— were old friends—men between whom more license is permissible than between mere acquaintances. They and the set they played with often chaffed each other good-naturedly.

But on this particular occasion *B*——, instead

of joining in the laugh, got angry, and was not on speaking terms with D—— for some months.

---

The following severe retort was good-humoredly taken; but, possibly, the retortee did not see to the bottom of it.

S—— was a very moderate player who “fancied” himself. Holding only two trumps, he deliberately forced his partner, contrary to all sound Whist doctrines. The consequence was that S—— lost the game, which he would easily have saved had he not violated a simple elementary principle.

F. (S——’s partner, a great player, in a tone of injured remonstrance).—How *could* you force me, with only two trumps?

S—— defended his play, as well as he could, on the ground of the score, and of what he considered to be the peculiar nature of his hand.

F.—Well, I cannot think you were justified.

Here the matter would have dropped, but S——, a very impetuous creature, lost his temper.

S. (firing up).—I don’t agree with you, that’s all.

Now, if F—— had said, “I don’t value your opinion,” or “don’t think it worth having,” S—— would have been furious. But F—— managed to say this in another way.



*F.* (after a pause, and very slowly, with a philosophic air).—I really do not know whether I should prefer to hear you say that you do agree with me, or that you do not agree with me.

This was very neatly put. But it requires some looking into to see the sneer of it. It made no more impression on the pachydermatous *S*—than, as Sydney Smith observed, tickling the dome of St. Paul's would make on the Dean and Chapter.

---

The same player (*F*—) was once being lectured by another moderate performer of the *S*— school. *F*— listened till his tormentor had finished, and then, in a most polite manner, without the least appearance of irritation or tone of sarcasm, (which, to my mind, made his reply peculiarly incisive), said:—

“I hear your argument with respect,—but—without conviction.”

---

As a contrast to the above, the following may be related. It is one of the most graceful speeches I ever heard at the Whist-table. It was made by the first Lord Lytton, a man of most polished manners. I was playing Whist with him at the Portland, a good many years ago, when it

was the fashion to wear hanging sleeves. During the rubber the king of hearts mysteriously disappeared, and after a time it dropped on the table, out of Lord Lytton's sleeve.

He said with a smile, "I am very glad to think that I am playing with gentlemen who know me."

---

Scene, a Whist Club.—A member who has been dining out, "not wisely but too well," cuts in.

A——B—— (a very good player) leads a heart: Diner-out (his partner) has king, knave and another, and puts on the knave, king being the usual play. It turns out very badly. After the hand,

*Diner-out* (to his partner).—Think I was right t' fin'sse knave 'v hearts?

*A. B.* (with a good-humored chuckle and a glance round the table).—I generally put on the king *before* dinner; *after* dinner I sometimes play the knave!

---

"It requires a very good player to win his partner's trick;" that is, of course, if he can avoid it.

I have often been stung into this remark by the eccentricities of my partners. This is the style of thing. Ace is led; I (second hand) play small; the others play small cards. The suit is continued.

I (second hand) play queen. My partner hesitates, looks feebly at the ceiling, like Dickens' waiter, rubs his forehead, and asks to look at the last trick. He then pulls out one card, puts it back and pulls out another. All this time the mountain is in labor; I know from experience the sort of mouse about to be brought forth. At last, out comes the king on my poor queen with a triumphant dash, and the knave follows, my partner looking wondrous wise, as though he would cry "Eureka."

I have a good hand, only wanting to know my partner with the best of the adversary's suit to lead a trump and make a fine score. But my partner by taking the lead from me gets his knave trumped by his right-hand opponent, who leads a suit his partner trumps, and so the game is saved.

Such a partner, oddly enough, never dreams of taking the lead if by so doing he can give me the tenace at the end of a hand. Thus: a small trump is led from a suit of four to the queen; I, second hand, play the seven; the third hand plays king, and wins the trick. A small trump is returned; my partner puts on ten; the original leader, supposing me to hold a tenace or the ace single, plays a small card; I play eight, and remain with ace, nine; queen and a small one being to my right. When three cards remain in each

hand, I, second player, win the trick in a plain suit ; my partner, having none of the suit and the knave of trumps, leaves the lead with me, though he ought to know from the fall of the cards that I remain with two trumps over the original leader.

These two cases happened in one rubber.

---

It is common enough in domestic circles, when people are asked to make up a rubber, to hear them decline at first on the plea that they really know nothing about the game. After a little pressing, they possibly agree to oblige by taking a hand if nobody else will, at the same time repeating their protestations of inability, and hoping they may not be "blown-up."

One generally does expect even the know-nothings to be able to deal and to follow suit, unless they are actually coerced into sitting down.

But I once played Whist at the house of a relative of mine with a gentleman who did not possess even this elementary knowledge.

A fourth being very much wanted, Mr. B—— F——, after vainly protesting that he "preferred looking on," that he "scarcely ever touched a card," and so forth, consented to make us up.

The cards were cut ; he was told it was his deal. Taking up the pack, he said to his partner:—



‘Do you deal out all the cards at this game?’

---

I have met various partners almost as simple as the one who did not know how to deal.

Being asked by one of these to give him a good general rule for Whist, I told him when he had the original lead and five trumps, always to lead one; adding that he would be right forty-nine times out of fifty, and that experience alone could tell him the exceptional cases.

We cut in. He was my partner. He had the lead, six trumps, tierce major, led another suit, and in consequence we only scored four instead of winning the game.

“If you do not like my rule,” I remarked, “of leading a trump from five, at least you might pay me the compliment of following it when you are my partner.”

“You told me,” he replied, “to lead trumps from *five*. I had six trumps, not five. How was I to know the rule applied to six? You should have said ‘five or more’ !”

---

It is by no means uncommon at the Whist-table, if you have every trick in your hand, and your partner is puzzling his brain as to which card he shall play, to give him a hint, especially

if he is habitually a slow player, that it is quite immaterial which card he pulls out if he will only go on.

This often assumes the form of playful satire; but, in the following instance, it was taken *au grand sérieux*.

My partner was Sir B. P——, a benevolent-looking old gentleman, who, I soon discovered, scarcely knew a spade from a diamond. However, we had very good cards, and finding myself with game in my hand, while my partner was pondering what card to play, I remarked, according to the time-honored Whist Joe Miller:—

“Play the one nearest your thumb.”

He looked much surprised, then said, quite seriously:—“Sir, you must not tell me which card I am to play!”

---

Playing with a stranger at an evening party, I, in the middle of a hand, seeing that the game was gone unless my partner held good trumps, led knave of trumps from knave and another. Second hand put on ace; my partner played king. I laid down my hand, observing, “We cannot save it.” My partner then put down his cards, amongst which were several trumps. “Oh!” I said, “I suppose you pulled out the wrong card!” “No,” replied my partner, “I have always been told to play highest third hand.”

Another instance of Whist innocence.

Some thirty years ago (1850), the call for trumps was not so generally practised as it is now. At the time I speak of I remember an old club player's sitting down to a rubber with a new-comer for a partner. The new-comer, a very indifferent performer, played his small cards anyhow, and thus unconsciously called for trumps. He had but a poor hand, and when it was over his partner observed, "I hardly think with your hand that you were justified in asking for trumps."

"I assure you," replied the stranger, "I did not ask for a trump. I should consider it very irregular to ask for a trump or for any other suit; but, as a matter of fact, I never opened my mouth!"

---

G——, who loved to make a little ruff, always led a single card with that object. On one occasion, seeing a single card in his hand, he led it as a matter of course, without noticing that he had no trump. His partner won the trick and returned the suit. At the end of the hand his partner quietly remarked:—

"In future, G——, when you lead a singleton, I shall understand it means you have no trump."

G—— was always very indignant if this *coup* was referred to, and even went so far as to characterize it as an invention. But I was present

when it occurred, and G——'s partner was my father.

---

Some of the Whist Innocents feel very much hurt if their knowledge of the game is called in question. The following is a case in point:—

*Victim* (mildly).—I led a diamond, and you, with ace, queen, third hand, put on the ace. Surely the queen is the usual card.

*Innocent*.—No doubt; but I won the trick with the ace.

*Victim*.—If you had finessed the queen, it would have won the trick just the same.

*Innocent*.—How can I tell where the king is?

*Victim* (sarcastically).—Well, *perhaps* I may be wrong, but with ace, queen, the third hand generally finesses. It is the only chance you have of finessing in the suit.

*Innocent* (carefully avoiding any reference to the word finesse).—I don't deny that, but the ace—

*Victim* (interrupting).—Oh! never mind. One would think you do not know what finessing means.

*Innocent* (waxing indignant).—Not know what finessing means! Of course I do. It's playing a card you haven't got!



The Whist Innocent occasionally gets out of his difficulties with a clever repartee, which stifles discussion.

On one occasion the Innocent holding ace, king, queen, &c., of clubs, ace, king, &c., of hearts, one small spade, and three small trumps, led the king of clubs, and then proceeded with the single spade.

Of that suit his partner had only ace, queen. He finessed the queen, which was taken by the king, fourth hand. The suit was returned. The Innocent, now second player, trumped it, and his partner's ace fell to the trump. After the hand there is a conversation:—

*Victim* (tremulously, but gently).—Partner, why not continue with your strong suit, instead of leading a singleton? I confess I can't understand your play.

*Innocent* (*con spirito*).—Well, if you *can't* understand it, it is of no use my endeavoring to explain it to you.

---

Clay's remarks on cutting in with those whose play is not known to us are excellent, and are applicable to the foregoing stories. He says, "If I am thrown among players of whom I know nothing, I feel that I play to a great disadvantage. I am like a boy on the first day of going to a new school, not knowing whom to like, whom to trust,

and whom to distrust, from whom to expect assistance and honest advice, or from whom to dread a hoax."

---

In contrast to the foregoing, let me give an example of how Whist ought to be played.

I led from five trumps. After two rounds the fall of the cards showed that all the remaining trumps were with my partner and myself, two in his hand and three in mine. One other suit had been played and was exhausted from our hands.

I now had three trumps, including the winning trump, and three cards in each of the unplayed suits. Not liking to open a suit of three cards, and having no indication as to my partner's suit, I led a losing trump, that my partner might get the lead and open his strong suit. He could have won the trick, but played a lower trump.

I knew from his not winning the trick that he also had three cards in each of the unplayed suits, as he would have penetrated my design, and if he had had a four-card suit would have won the trick. At the end of the hand, I said, "When you did not win my third trump, I saw we could do no good, as you must hold three cards in each of the unplayed suits."

"Yes," he replied, "I knew that very well when you led a losing trump; for *you* must hold three cards in each of the other suits."

Thus we each counted the number of cards the other held in two suits, neither of which had been played.

This is Whist.

My partner was E—— T—— F——, the finest Whist-player I have ever met.

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Matthews, whose Whist was very good, considering it was written in the beginning of this century, says: "Observe silently and attentively the different systems of those with whom you commonly play; few but have their favorite one, the knowledge of which will give you a constant advantage." And again: "I must also repeat my advice to proficients to vary their play according to the set they are engaged with; and recollect, it would be of no advantage to speak French like Voltaire, if you lived with people who are ignorant of the language."

"Mogul," again, in *The Field* (February 23, 1867), remarks: "It would be absurd for players to say that certain points of play cannot be allowed as right, although sound in principle, because partners may mistake their meaning. If their partners are good players, they will not make the mistake; if they are doubtful players, then all refined points of play should be avoided. For it must be borne in mind that, to rightly esti-

mate the strength of your partner's and opponents' play, and to play accordingly, is one of the highest qualities of a Whist-player."

Many good players conduct their hands in precisely the same way, irrespective of the class of partner to whom they may be sitting opposite. There are but few who are very skilful in helping lame dogs over stiles.

E—— T—— F—— is one of these few. He is the best player, with a bad partner, that I know. The lame dogs say, "I like playing with F—— because I understand his game," the fact being that F—— is the only man in the club who can understand the lame dog's game, and can play down to his level accordingly.

Homer sometimes nods; and it so happens that I can give an example where F—— did not play his partner.

F—— (leader) has two cards in hand, viz., the last trump and a losing club. Clubs have never been led. Each of the other players has two clubs. What ought F—— to lead?

If the third player is very good, the proper lead is the losing card, and especially if the second hand is a muff, as the muff will probably not put on ace second hand, not having counted the trumps, and the third hand may make the king. Also, if the third hand has ace, queen, he, being a good player, will not finesse.



*Per contra*, if the third hand is a muff, the proper lead is the trump.

F—— led the losing club. The third hand was a muff, and holding ace, queen, finessed the queen. The fourth hand made the king. The third hand then got a mild lecture for finessing (for F—— never blows up his partner), or rather for not counting the trumps. But, in fact, F—— should have lectured himself for not playing his man, as I told him afterwards privately.

---

Another example, and perhaps a better one, occurs to me. Three cards remain in each hand. I (leader) have king, ten, and a small trump. The other players have nothing but trumps, except my partner, who has two trumps and a thirteenth card. Ace turned up to my left. We are three, the adversaries four, and each side has five tricks. If my partner has queen, knave of trumps, we win the game whatever I play.

If the ace, queen of trumps, are against us, we must lose the game whatever I play.

But if my partner has queen and a small trump only, the problem is how to make two of the remaining three tricks.

I led the king of trumps. The second hand, with ace, knave, and a small one, passed it, considering the queen must be in my hand.

I then led the small trump.

The second hand put on knave, saying, "Now I've got you!" His blank amazement at finding his knave taken by my partner's queen, and the game saved, was very comical to behold, and caused a shout of laughter, in which, however, my left-hand adversary did not join.

I should add that this gentleman was very prone to hold up ace, knave, and I felt sure he would do so here if he had the knave. But I think the play wrong, as had I held king and queen of trumps, at this particular point of the game my best lead would be queen, and if that was passed, the small one.

---

Among the numerous letters I receive about Whist, instances of unusual distribution of cards are not infrequent: as, for example, that A dealt himself thirteen trumps; or had three consecutive hands without a trump; or that B and C had all the trumps between them. These letters are generally accompanied by a permission to publish the facts (which are well authenticated), or by the question whether such a case ever happened before, and sometimes by a request to calculate the odds against such an occurrence.

The obvious reply is that one named hand or combination is no more improbable than another,

and that curious hands which illustrate no principle of play are not worth the trouble of calculating.

The following singular combination of cards is, however, worth recording, as it may be made to point a moral. It came under my observation at the Portland, Clay and my father being partners.

The game was four-all. The dealer turned up a small heart. Clay led a diamond. The second hand had ace, king, queen, knave, ten, nine, and two of trumps. With these cards the problem is how to lose the odd trick.

The second hand contrived it in this way. He had no diamond, and trumped the card led with the deuce of hearts.

My father (third hand) also had no diamond, and only one trump, the three, with which he overtrumped.

In the end the holder of the sixième major only made his six trumps, his adversaries having six winning cards in the unplayed suits, which neither of the opponents could trump. They therefore lost the odd trick and the game.

Had the second hand (B——) trumped with the nine originally, he must have won the game, however the cards lay. For, his partner being dealer, held the trump card, and consequently B——, by then leading trumps, must make seven tricks, even if all the remaining trumps are in one hand against him.

No doubt B—— regarded the chance of the third hand's having none of the suit in which he himself was void as practically *nil*. Nevertheless, he might have made the game absolutely certain.

The moral is, Never throw a chance away.

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How many hands can be held at Whist?

This question is often asked. It is not difficult to calculate the answer. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to state accurately what is meant by the question. Does it mean (*a*) how many different hands can an individual hold; or (*b*) how many different hands can the four players hold; and (*c*) does it count a different hand if the same hands are held by the four players in different orders—*eg.*, A holding B's hand and B holding A's hand, and so on; and (*d*) does it count a different hand if the same cards are held and a different trump card is turned up?

The number of different hands that an individual can hold is simply the number of ways thirteen things can be taken out of fifty-two, without having two sets of thirteen alike. The answer to this is 635,013,559,600.

It is evidently a different *Whist-hand* if A Y B and Z one or all interchange an entire hand. It is also to my mind a different *Whist-hand* if a different trump card is turned up.

If this is admitted, the total possible number



of Whist-hands that can be held by all the four players is 697,381,590,951,354,306,910,086,720,000.

This result has been multiplied out several times by different people and submitted to various tests, and it may be relied on as accurate. The process of calculation was submitted to the late Mr. Bidder, the well-known engineer, whose power over figures was of European celebrity, and he agreed that it is correct; only he would not admit that it is a different hand if a different card is turned up. Those who take this view have only to divide the above number by 13, when the result will be the number of possible hands if the question *d* is answered in the negative. If the question *c* is also answered in the negative, it will be necessary further to divide by 24.

If any one desires to verify the figures given, he has only to perform the following little multiplication sum:—

$$\begin{array}{r} 52 \cdot 51 \cdot 50 \cdot \dots \dots \dots 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1 \\ \hline (13 \cdot 12 \cdot 11 \cdot \dots \dots \dots 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1)^4 \end{array} \times 13$$


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Misprints sometimes read very queerly. In a reply of mine to a Loo question, the word “loood” was misprinted “loved” with the following comical effect:—

“If you are loved by Miss it is the same as

though you were loved by any one else. It makes no difference whether you play an unlimited game or not."

---

In criticising my "Historical Notes on Whist," the editor of a London paper blamed me for saying nothing about Scotch-Whist.

I wrote to him explaining that Scotch-Whist, or Catch-the-Ten, was purposely omitted, as it has no more resemblance to Whist than the Scotch fiddle has to a violin.

To my surprise and amusement he inserted my letter in his next number.

---

The same gentleman also found fault with me for quoting from "Antony and Cleopatra" a passage beginning "My good knave Eros," and saying that "knave" was a punning allusion to a knave at cards. My critic contended that when "Antony and Cleopatra" was written, knave was not used in this sense.

It so happened that the statement was taken from Douce's "Illustrations of Shakespeare," and it was, therefore, most likely right. But not being a profound philologist, I was at a loss to prove my case.

As luck would have it, however, I chanced just afterwards to find in Cotgrave's "French and

English Dictionary," "Valet de Pique, Knaue of Clubs."

Cotgrave was published in 1611.

"Antony and Cleopatra" was written about 1607.

So I wrote the editor to the effect that, unless he could show the modern signification of the word knave to have been acquired between the years 1607 and 1611, his strictures only exposed his imperfect acquaintance with the history of the word.

He was good enough to insert this also.

---

In the advertisement of the "American Hoyle" the following occurs:—"It is not a re-hash of English Games, but a live American book, expressly prepared for American readers."

Finding the live American book had reached its tenth edition in 1877, I ordered a copy, but to my surprise was informed that it could not be imported in the regular way because some of it was pirated, or re-hashed!

I was, therefore, obliged to commission a friend to smuggle a copy from New York.

The Whist is a compilation from Pole, Clay, and myself. I do not complain of American reprints of my books or articles while there is no International Copyright Act. The Americans are

within their rights in reprinting ; but there is no occasion to add gratuitous lies in the advertisements. American papers please copy.

In the present case what is taken from me is very little, but it is not acknowledged except in one place, where I am playfully called "The writer 'Cavendish'" (p. 17). Several of the smaller games are taken from Bohn and other English books. An article on "Obsolete Card-Games" is reprinted from a paper I wrote years ago in "Once a Week." My knowledge of the subject was then very imperfect, and, of course, all my mistakes are copied.

An article on "Probabilities at Poker" is acknowledged as by Dr. Pole and myself. In this article, by a slip of the pen, the odds against a straight flush with a pack of fifty-two cards are given as 650,000 to 1. The real odds are 64,973 to 1. The mistake arose thus: Dr. Pole, in order to save the trouble of multiplying out, made use of logarithms, and accidentally wrote one place of figures too many.

I cannot say that the re-hasher of the American Hoyle is welcome to my articles, but he is heartily welcome to the mistakes.

---

Why is Piquet so little played in England?

It is generally admitted to be by far the best card-



game for two persons, taking the same position as Whist does with regard to four-handed games.

In France, as every one knows, Piquet is universally played.

English indifference to the game may perhaps be attributed to its complex nature, a difficulty by no means insuperable, unless we are willing to concede that we are either less intelligent or more lazy than our vivacious neighbors.

That the French should possess, as it were, a monopoly of so beautiful a game is as regrettable to me as it was to Rowland Hill that the Devil should have all the best tunes.

---

When Bézique first became the rage, about 1868, no two sets of rules agreed. The rules "lived dispersedly in many lands, and every minstrel sang them differently." In my first little book on the subject I gave the principal variations. Shortly after I was much amused on receiving a letter, from which the following is an extract :—

"I ventured, a few evenings ago, to score aces and tens as I won them. My adversary, a lady, 'flew out' at me, saying, 'Why, in that way, you'll get out before me, and I have several things to declare; surely declarations ought to take precedence of stupid old aces and tens.'

“ My adversary was so far correct that if I continued to mark those ‘stupid old aces and tens’ I should probably score 1,000 first, for I was 940, and she was quite 200 behind. I calmly referred her to ‘Aces and Tens,’ p. 12, in ‘Cavendish’s Pocket Guide to Bézique’; but she said, ‘I never heard of Bézique being played in that way,—*never.*’ And then she read out the paragraph, p. 10, headed ‘Counting Aces and Tens,’ and raised her voice when she came to the words, ‘This is the usual system,’ and then stopped suddenly, and put the little book in her pocket. ‘There,’ she said, ‘do you hear? “This is the *usual* system.” I should think it *was* the usual system indeed, and I beg you will follow it.’

“ When we had finished playing, at my earnest request the rules were restored to me, and then I perceived that my *fair* opponent had omitted to read the words that follow ‘this is the usual system,’ viz., ‘but for a better one see p. 13,’ which backs up my system. My constitution is not robust enough to stand hot arguments before retiring to rest, so I let the matter drop.”

---

“ The fascinatin but slightly onsartain game” of Poker has within the last few years (1878) become a favorite in England. In the United States, whence it was imported, it is universally played.

Poker may be described as Brag with improvements. The great object of each player is to mystify every one else as to the contents of his hand. A good Poker-face, one that will not betray the nature of a hand by change of countenance, is a valuable possession. Chaffing and talking without regard to facts (called Poker-talk), with a view of misleading, is permitted, and is considered quite fair. As a round game, poker ranks high; but it is open to one great objection, viz., that the game cannot be played properly unless large stakes are engaged.

An admirable illustration of Poker-talk lately published in an American journal is worth quoting:—

“Austen attempted to teach Murphy how to play Poker. Murphy learnt rapidly, and the stakes, from a small beginning of beans, soon developed into bullion. When the pot had risen to sixteen dollars, Murphy got inquisitive.

“*Murphy*.—S’posin a man has two kings?

“*Austen*.—Not such a bad hand, but two pairs is better.

“*Murphy*.—Oh! Then s’posin a man has two more kings, is that double?”

[For the information of those who do not play Poker, it may be observed that four kings is one of the best hands that can be held, but that two pairs is only a moderate hand.]

“*Austen*.—Thunder! I throw up my hand. You are a big fool to have told me. You might have won all I have!

“Murphy raked in the pot, laid down his hand, and started home.

“Austen picked up the relinquished cards, ran them through, and was heard to exclaim, ‘Two sixes! by all that’s blue!’”

---

Of course, it is a standing order at Whist that lookers-on should not speak. The Etiquette of Whist says:—

“Bystanders should make no remark, neither should they by word or gesture give any intimation of the state of the game.”

And the Club Code says:—

“If a bystander make any remark which calls the attention of a player or players to an oversight affecting the score, he is liable to be called on, by the players only, to pay the stakes, and all bets on that game or rubber.”

Before this law was passed there was no penalty for drawing attention to oversights in the score; to do so was only an offence against etiquette.

Clay told me that what he most prided himself on in all his card-room experience was his self-control under the following circumstances:—

He laid the long odds. The players he was



backing, who had won the first game, forgot to mark it. They then won the second game and the rubber, but only scored one game, and continued to play.

The player with whom Clay had previously betted then asked him to lay the long odds.

Clay felt sorely tempted to say, "Why, I've won the long odds already." Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would undoubtedly have done so; but Clay had presence of mind enough to decline the bet without further remark. This, it will be remembered, was before the law had been passed which imposes a penalty on a bystander for drawing attention to an oversight in scoring.

I believe Clay eventually lost the long odds, and had to pay them, as bets go with the stakes; but cannot charge my memory positively as to the result of the rubber.

---

Entering a Club card-room one afternoon I saw a card under D——'s chair. I said "Oh! you've——" intending to add "dropped a card," but, remembering I had no business to speak, stopped myself.

*D.*—What were you going to say?

*Ego.*—Oh, nothing! I've no right to say anything.

*D.* (rather a nervous old gentleman, plaintively).—Oh! do tell me if I've done anything wrong! I wouldn't do anything wrong for the *world*!—(and so on for several minutes). At last,

*Ego*.—I'll say what I was going to say if the adversaries will give me permission.

*Adversaries*.—Oh! certainly, certainly, we don't want to take any advantage of a mistake (etc., etc.)

*Ego* (to *D*—).—Well, then, you've dropped a card.

*D.* (looking under his chair, picks up the card and puts it in his hand).—Thank you, I'm so *much* obliged to you.

Game proceeds.

*D.*—Well, that's game, four by honors and several by cards (throws down his hand).

*Adversary*.—Hallo! You've got a card too many. (The dropped card, which *D*— had put in his hand, was then discovered to belong to the other pack.) Fresh deal.

*D.*—Jones told me it was mine.

*Adversary*.—We've nothing to do with what Jones told you. You should have counted your cards.

*D.*—Jones! Look here! What is the rule?

But I had left. Foreseeing what was about to happen, I had been suddenly seized with a burning desire to ascertain whether there was any one

in the billiard-room. How it ended I don't know, except that a bystander told me afterwards I was well abused all round.

Moral:—Never, as an outsider, make any remark on the game, unless appealed to.

---

Club Committees occasionally act in a very despotic manner, forgetting that they are only appointed to manage the affairs of the members. Any serious misconduct ought not to be dealt with by a Committee, but by a special general meeting.

At a London club, where no game is allowed on Sundays, it used to be the practice to play after twelve on Saturday night. On one occasion, however, the fact that play had continued after twelve on Saturday night was brought officially to the notice of the Committee (who before that were perfectly cognizant of the practice), and the attention of the members engaged was called to the rule about Sunday play. The Committee wrote to the offenders (?) informing them that under Rule — a repetition of their crime would entail their summary expulsion.

Certain fines are also exacted for late play, and these fines were duly paid, and this fact was within the knowledge of the Committee.

I don't offer any opinion as to whether or not it is wicked to finish a rubber of Whist on Satur-

day night if the clock strike twelve in the middle of it; but it is rather amusing to think that the club in question pocketed the fines, thus rendering themselves partakers of the crime, and that at the same time the Committee bullied the members who paid the fines. This proceeding, to quote Artemus Ward, "betrays genius of a lofty character."

---

Turning over the leaves of a blotting-book at a play-club I came across the following fragment of a letter, which I read almost before I was aware of it, or, as Mrs. Cluppins might have said, "the words forced themselves upon my eye":—

"Sir,—When I had the pleasure of meeting you yesterday, as you did not refer to the racing and card account between us, I fancy it must have slipped your memory that you owe me one hundred and eighty-seven pounds——"

Here the letter broke off.

What a precious bad memory that fellow must have had!

---

I was once paid ten pounds twice over, owing to some mistake in card accounts. On trying to set it right the player who had overpaid admitted entire forgetfulness of the transaction, but was willing to take the ten pounds back if I was sure about it. I demurred to this, on the ground that



the mistake might possibly have been mine, but added that, as I did not feel justified in keeping the money, I would give it to any charity he liked to name.

He said he did not care, so I proposed to present ten guineas to the Asylum for Idiots.

My friend was a little nettled at this, though really no reflection on his mental powers was intended. This channel was merely chosen because I thought the asylum a deserving institution.

---

C—— B—— C——, an old friend of mine, a Fellow of his college, and also a capital Whist-player, having obtained an appointment, resigned his Fellowship, and left Cambridge to fulfil his new duties.

C——'s father, himself a scholar, but not a University man, had a very easily-to-be-conceived notion that the Dons valued scarcely any branch of knowledge outside mathematics and classics.

This gentleman happened to visit Cambridge shortly after his son's departure, and was entertained at the high table. He was naturally delighted at the compliments that were paid to his son's abilities, and at the regrets the Fellows expressed for his loss.

"Mr. C——," said the Master of a neighboring Hall, in a dignified manner, "your son's leaving us is deemed quite a loss to the University."

Mr. C—— pricked up his ears, expecting another tribute to his son's intellectual superiority.

The Master continued, "The fact is we have not had a good rubber since he left!"

C—— B—— C—— being a high wrangler, one need not sympathize with his father at finding his son had not confined his studies solely to the *curriculum* imposed by *Alma Mater*.

---

The father of another friend of mine, under somewhat similar circumstances, had more reason to grieve.

Having at his son's request taken him away from his profession, and placed him at the University, at some effort to himself, trusting to find his reward in his son's scholastic success, I was able to congratulate him one day on the young fellow's having obtained a prize, the information having been imparted to me by the father himself. But he roughly stopped my complimentary expressions as follows:—

"Yes, he has won a prize!" Then, with a curl of the lip and a snort of chagrin, "The Silver Billiard Cue."

---

The Laws of Whist, though very good in the principles on which they are based, are, it must be

confessed, loosely worded. It is to be hoped that some day the drafting may be reconsidered. If this were done with the consent of the clubs that have adopted the laws (which one would think could be readily obtained), a boon would be conferred on Whist-players.

I could give many instances of bad drafting, but, as this is not the place for criticism on the Laws of Whist, will quote only two forwarded by a humorous friend, S—— P——, with a hope that the wording of our Whist code might be revised:—

“I have been considerably irritated of late by a Mr. Muff, a practical joker who, if he had only read the instructions of ‘Cavendish’ as carefully as he reads the rules, might some day play one card out of three correctly.

“’Twas only the other day Mr. Muff was dealing, when his partner exclaimed, ‘You have misdealt!’ He replied, ‘I am certain I have not,’ and proceeded deliberately to count the cards remaining in his hand. I exclaimed, ‘Now you have made a misdeal of it!’ ‘No, I have not,’ he replied, ‘fetch the rules.’ And sure enough, he, not being under the impression that he had made a mistake (Law 44, par. v.) when he counted the cards, I could not claim a misdeal, but could only look severe and feel that I had been sold.

“I trusted that the dignified silence with which

I accepted his reading of the rules would have made some impression on him. Vain hope! A few days afterwards he was again my opponent (the only piece of luck I had had that day), when his partner called attention to the trick by drawing his card towards him before Mr. Muff had played. I required the latter to play the highest of the suit. He played a small one, and presently one higher. 'Well,' said I, 'I shall claim a revoke presently, if required.' 'You may claim as much as you like,' he said, 'but you cannot enforce it.' 'We shall see,' I rejoined. We won the game on the hand, and, as they were at love, there was no necessity to claim the penalty. But thinking that, for once, I knew the rules better than he, I called for the code and placed Rule 61 before him, triumphantly. 'Can't you read?' he said. 'I am not "a player who has rendered himself liable;" it was my partner who rendered me liable to have my highest card called. You have no penalty for my disobedience, save only that of not playing with me again. But please don't do that, for I have got one or two more sells for you, and in time you'll know the rules.'

"I was so vexed, I almost revoked next hand; and have ever since prayed that some Solon or Lycurgus would arise and revise our Whist-laws."



Law 33 always amuses me hugely. It informs us that "each player deals in his turn." This looks like a bit of dry humor, especially as the law continues, "The right of dealing goes to the left," reminding one of the rule of the road:—

"If you go to the left you are sure to go right,  
If you go to the right you go wrong."

Law 84, limiting the power of consultation between partners, gives rise to numerous arguments and queries. After vainly endeavoring to make it clear to two friends, B—— and S——, that they are at liberty to consult as to which of them shall exact the penalty, but that they must not consult as to which penalty it is advisable to exact, B—— said, "I suppose I'm very dense, but for the life of me, I cannot understand it now." "No more can I," echoed S——, "the Laws of Whist seem to me to have been invented for the express purpose of puzzling people."

Some of the laws certainly might be made more clear; and I quite agree with S—— P—— that revision at the hands of a modern Solon or Lycurgus is desirable.

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Who has not experienced the truth of the proverb, "*Ridiculum acri?*" No doubt a little playful banter will often carry a point, more surely, and apparently more convincingly, than the most

carefully considered argument. A small instance of this occurs to me.

While the laws of a certain game were under discussion, I proposed a modification in one of the rules.

My suggestion was at first vehemently opposed. After exhausting time and temper, on what appeared to me to be simply a factious opposition, I gave up further argument, and closed my final reply in these terms:—

“This appears to me to be common-sense, and therefore”—mark the therefore—“I do not expect it will be adopted, common-sense being, as Abernethy said, “a very uncommon thing.”

The alteration I contended for was eventually carried by a large majority.

---

Certainties, like infinities, may be of different orders. For instance, there is the absolute certainty and the moral certainty. That parallel lines can never meet is an absolute certainty; laying against “dead’uns” is only a moral certainty. For dead’uns sometimes turn out to be real red-hot live’uns: witness Hermit for the Derby.

When I first joined the — Whist Club, my rule was not to bet. But occasionally I was so pressed by a very indifferent player to “give” him a bet, that I yielded. As far as play went it looked like a “moral.” But I lost by it.

I also laid the long odds sometimes. This is another "moral" in the long-run; but for some months I lost by the odds.

I won a majority of rubbers, but was out of pocket by these irregular bets.

Meeting a friend at another club, he inquired, "How are you getting on at your new club?"

I puzzled him rather by replying, "I should have done very well if I had not been betting on certainties."

Another illustration of the uncertainty of certainties occurs to me in the story of the Whist-player who had a way of saying, by way of joke, that "he believed in nothing but the Ace of Trumps." Even this rag of a belief was snatched from him in the following cruel manner:—

Playing Whist at the M—— Club, the sceptic won a treble and four, when his opponents called for new cards. The next hand the sceptic won six tricks, and still holding ace of trumps, placed it on the table, observing, "There's the game and rubber."

His right-hand adversary, however, produced another ace of trumps (the pack, as occasionally happens with new cards, containing a duplicate), and consequently there had to be a fresh deal; and the sceptic eventually lost the rubber.

Travellers tell us that savages cannot count beyond ten. Long experience at Whist has convinced me that it is far more difficult than is commonly supposed for civilized people to count thirteen; for how often it happens that even good players excuse a mistake by saying they thought there was another trump in, or they had miscounted the spades.

---

After I had played Whist a few times with H. H. the M—— ———, he said to me, "I did not know until yesterday that I was a pupil of yours. I used to be a very bad player till I got your book."

"I feel greatly flattered, M——," I replied, "by your notice. I hope it has turned out a profitable investment."

"Oh no!" he said, "it has not. Since I studied the game I have lost thousands."

The M—— was considerably above an average player and did not play high; so his "thousands" must have been a humorous exaggeration.

---

A lady friend of mine, residing in Buckinghamshire, was playing Whist at Latimer, and Lord Chesham (whose family name is Cavendish) was her partner. He played in some way quite contrary to rule, and Mrs. H——, who was a book-



player, said to him in the course of conversation, "You should read the book 'Cavendish.'"

Lord Chesham was very much astonished at being addressed, as he supposed, thus familiarly by a lady visitor; and it had to be explained to him that Mrs. H—— was recommending a book on Whist for his perusal.

---

Going into the card-room of a country club one day, I was invited to cut in, and it so happened that my partner, a Major S——, was the only player in the room to whom I was not personally known. The Major dealt, and just before he turned up he said to me,

"Do you play the call for trumps?"

The shout of laughter with which the other players greeted this question rather disconcerted my gallant partner.

It should be added, for the benefit of those who are not club-players, that this question was by no means unusual some years ago.

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Scene, library in a private house. After dinner, Whist going on. *Dramatis personæ*: Col. I—— (the host, a man of classical attainments); F—— N—— (a facetious man); X—— (an uneducated man, whom Col. I—— has picked up at the last minute to make a fourth); and H—— J——.

*F. N.* (having won the odd trick).—That's the *dolus* or trick.

*Col. I.*—I never knew *dolus* meant "the odd trick" (opens book-case and takes down Latin dictionary).

*Tutti.*—Now, Colonel, table up. (The Colonel puts down the dictionary. H—— J——, who has cut out, takes it up. At the end of the hand),

*H. J.*—Here it is. "*Dolus*, an artful contrivance, cunning device, trick. *Doctus dolus*, a clever trick."

Fresh hand begins. X—— wins the odd trick by a desperate finesse.

X.—There you are, Colonel! There's a *doctor's bolus* for you!

---

Scene, a Whist Club. *Dramatis personæ*: R—— D—— D—— (a most accomplished player) and H—— J—— partners; Capt. P—— (an adversary of moderate capacity).

P——'s score is three. D—— and J—— have made five tricks. D—— opens a fresh suit, spades, of which J—— holds ace, queen, and two small ones. J—— does not finesse the queen, but plays ace to save the game. The king of spades happens to be to J——'s right. Eventually D—— and J——lose the odd trick.

J. (jokingly and ironically to his partner).—I lost the odd trick there, by bad play.

D.—How?

Ƴ.—Not finessing the queen of spades.

P.—Capital! I like to see these Professors make mistakes. What made you do it?

Ƴ. (with asperity).—It so happened that that trick saved the game! (Collapse of P——.)

D. (coming to P——'s rescue).—It did not save the game unless I had an honor.

Ƴ. (with more asperity).—It so happened that you turned up the knave! (Collapse of D——.)

---

I have stated that all the anecdotes in table-talk are true. I do not vouch for the one below, but give it as I heard it.

A rubber was going on at the Portland. Five tricks had been played, of which H—— had won two, consequently eight cards remained in his hand. He put his hand of cards on the table to take a pinch of snuff, and by mistake, took up the two tricks before him instead of his own cards. They happened to be two tricks in trumps containing all the honors. He trumped the next trick, played out the trumps, and necessarily won the game, and no one observed what had happened until it was pointed out by a bystander.

This sounds very like a *canard*; but an old member of the club assured me that it actually occurred.

Scarcely a less extraordinary thing happened when Lory Lytton, Clay, my father, and another member, whose name I forget, were playing at the Portland. They were using two white packs, and a trick from one pack got mixed with the other, so that one pack contained forty-eight cards, the other fifty-six. The imperfect pack was dealt with, and after two or three tricks were played the hand was abandoned, and a treble scored. The redundant pack was then dealt with, but a misdeal was made. Had it not been so the duplicate cards must have been discovered.

The third deal was a repetition of the first, and a bumper was won with forty-eight cards.

The circumstance would never have been brought to light at all had not my father thought that some one was "bottling" the ace of diamonds; and when the cards were thrown down he examined them to ascertain who had it. He then discovered that there was no ace of diamonds in the pack. He at once privately consulted a bystander as to the proper course to pursue—whether he ought to take the points or not. The bystander said that the adversaries having abandoned the rubber, it was too late for them to plead that it had not been properly won. (See Law 59.) After the settlement my father told the players what had happened. The point as to the right of the winners to receive the points was referred,



and was properly decided in accordance with the bystander's view already given.

Perhaps a still more remarkable fact is that, after the rubber, all the players said they thought they had counted their hands before playing.

---

When my book on Whist was first published, the authorship was kept a profound secret. I sent a copy, "with the author's compliments," to my father; and great was the amusement of my brother (who knew all about it) and myself at the "governor's" guesses as to where it could have come from.

One evening, when about to play a family rubber for love, we proposed to the "governor" to play one of the hands in the book, "to see if the fellow knew anything about it." He consented. We sorted one of the hands (Hand No. XXXVI., p. 246, 12th Edition), giving my father Y's hand, others of our circle taking the other hands, and my brother sitting out book in hand, to see whether we followed the "book" play.

The "governor" played the hand all right till he came to the coup at trick 9, when he went on with his established diamonds.

*Frater* (interrupting).—The book says that is wrong.

*Pater*.—Well, what does the book say?

*Frater*.—The book says you should lead a trump.

*Pater*.—But there are no more trumps in! (Hesitates, and seeing that he has two trumps, and that leading one of them will not do any harm, leads it, and then turns round triumphantly and says),—Now what does the book say?

*Frater* (very quietly).—The book says you should lead *another* trump.

This was too much. Lead a thirteenth trump when you can give your partner a discard! Oh! no! So the “governor” would not and did not lead the trump, and he scored four.

We then persuaded him to play the hand again, and to lead the thirteenth trump. To his surprise he scored five.

He then admitted it was “very good,” but could not think who in the world had sent him that book.

---

Of course I seldom played at the same table with my father at the Portland. But it occasionally happened that there was only one table, and that we must either play together or lose our amusement.

On one of these afternoons I was Z in Hand No. XXXVIII. (12th Edition, p. 253), and my father was B. By reference to the book it will be seen that I played the *grand coup* against him.

My partner was a very good player. When the hand was over the following conversation took place:—

*K.* (my partner to me).—You trumped my best diamond.

*Ego.*—I know I did. We won the trick by it.

*K.*—I don't see how you could win a trick by trumping a winning card!

I should mention that my father had seen the position as well as I had, that he knew I had three trumps (as was clear after my discard at Trick 8), and that he was waiting to be led to in trumps. I noticed, too, from his manner, that he hardly knew whether to be pleased at my good play or annoyed at being out-manœuvred.

*Ego* (to *K.*).—Ask the “governor” if we didn't.

*Pater* (gruffly).—Of course you did, of course you did.

I afterwards told Clay of this *coup*, and he was good enough to say that he admired the discard of the king of spades at Trick 8.

He also chaffed the “governor” a bit about my “unfilial conduct.”

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According to my experience the opportunity for playing the *grand coup* occurs about once in a thousand rubbers; to an individual player about once in four thousand rubbers.

I can only remember to this date (January, 1879) to have played it eight times.

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The secret of my *nom de plume*, of course, oozed out by degrees. The process of oozing occasionally led to odd positions.

One day my partner, Col. the Hon. P—— F——, asked me point-blank, across the table, if I knew who the author was. Bushe, my adversary, who was in the secret, pointed out the author to my partner, much to his astonishment.

At dinner, at a friend's house, Mr. Q——, a stranger to me, whom I afterwards discovered to be a more than average player, remarked to our host, P——, also a Whist-player, that he had had a curious hand at Whist from which he thought it doubtful which card should be led originally. The hand was as follows :—Ace, king, queen of spades ; nine, eight, six, four, three of hearts ; eight of clubs ; and ace, king, queen, three of diamonds (trumps). Score, love-all. P——, being in the secret, turned to me and said, “ Jones, what is your opinion ? ”

I replied, I thought there was no sufficient reason for departing from the rule of leading the longest suit, and that I should start with a small heart.

Q.—I don't think the lead can be decided off-



hand in that way. However, I have written to "Cavendish" about it.

*P.* (humorously).—I have already submitted it to "Cavendish," and he said he should lead a small heart.

*Q.* (surprised).—How on earth could you have done that! The case only occurred last night, and this is the first time I have mentioned it to any one.

*P.* (always ready for a joke).—What I have told you is the fact.

*Q.* (puzzled and a little up in his stirrups).—I suppose I may believe the evidence of my own senses.

*P.*— and I then looked at each other and laughed so heartily that *Q.*— said—

"There can be only one explanation of the matter. Mr. Jones, you must be—"

"Quite so," said *P.*—.

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From a Whist point of view the hand just given is interesting, good judges differing as to which of three suits should be led originally.

The cards it will be remembered were as follows:—Ace, king, queen of spades; nine, eight, six, four, three of hearts; eight of clubs; and ace, king, queen, three of diamonds (trumps).

The hand was shown to a large number of players of repute. Some would lead one, some

two, some three rounds of trumps; and after leading trumps some would proceed with the spade suit, some with the heart suit. Others would not touch a trump at all, but would lead in the first instance either a spade or a heart. Others would lead a round of trumps, then a round of spades, then a heart. The majority were in favor of an original spade lead.

I did not ask any players who are in the habit of opening the hand with a single card, or I could have got plenty of opinions in favor of a club lead.

Petrie, a fine player of the old school, was in favor of a spade lead. He wrote me as follows:—

“If my partner can make a couple of tricks, I expect to win the game, as I can reasonably expect to make seven tricks myself. Establishing the hearts would, therefore, form no part of my scheme. I should lead spades, and if they yielded three rounds should go on with the hearts. I am opposed to a trump lead, preferring to lie quiet, when I am pretty sure to realize four tricks in the suit.”

Q——, the player to whom the hand was actually dealt, led a spade. His partner dropped the eight. Q—— then played a second round, to which his partner threw the knave. Q—— then led a third round, to see what his partner discarded. It turned out that the second hand had

six spades originally, so the fourth hand made a small trump, and led a club. The command of the club suit lay with the present leader and his partner. Q—— was forced, and only made the odd trick, though his partner had a fine heart suit and four trumps.

My objection to the spade lead is that its policy lies chiefly in the hope that spades may go round three times. If three rounds of spades are decided on, why not first extract three rounds of trumps? Also, supposing the spades do go round three times, I am then driven to the heart suit, after having parted with the command of spades. And I fail to perceive that this postponement of the lead from the long suit in any way improves my partner's chance of making the two tricks I require from him.

Clay's opinion, which is most interesting, was as under :—

“I am convinced that the right way to lead from this hand is either to begin with a heart, or to lead first one round of trumps. You play to win the game, which you can hardly do unless your partner has strength in hearts, or trumps the suit. I incline to the trump lead. I think one is bound to give one's partner some intimation of considerable strength. It is a risk. No doubt, the trump lead will take from him a trump, with which he might trump a heart ; but the risk ought

to be run, in order to show your partner that you play to win the game. If you take a round of trumps, is it to be with the king or the queen? I think the queen; for if you play the king and stop, your partner looks for ace, knave, in your hand, and feels himself obliged to play a trump when he comes in. On the other hand, your queen may puzzle him; yet he can hardly think that ace and king are held up against you. When you change your suit, if he is intelligent, he guesses how things are. 'My partner,' he says, 'is very strong in trumps, most probably had the tierce major; but his suit is a long weak one, and he will not draw the trumps until he sees whether I can help him.' If he reasons thus, as he ought to do, he plays accordingly,—the trump if he has a good heart suit,—something else if he is weak in hearts. I have asked George Payne his opinion. I consider that he has the greatest genius for the game of any man I know. He would begin with the heart. He is an imperfect player from his long practice with muffs, and his habit of betting on races, &c., during the play of the hand. But he is a real genius, and there is no one like him to play with muffs, and guess, as it were by inspiration, all their absurdities."

My objection to Clay's trump lead, with great deference, is that I could not pick out any good player who would not return the trump lead the moment he got in,



I lead the heart. My object is to establish the heart, if my partner has strength in the suit, to force him if he has not.

The only argument I can see against the heart lead is, that if one adversary is strong in hearts, and the other weak in hearts and short of spades, a double ruff may be established. This I look on as an off-chance.

I do not begin with a trump lest my partner should be numerically weak in hearts and trumps. I do not begin with the spade, because I want the spades as cards of re-entry.

Suppose the same hand with the knave instead of the queen of spades. All doubt vanishes, the heart is then clearly, to my mind, the right lead. I cannot see that the substitution of the knave for the queen of spades so affects the hand as to alter its scheme.

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*Apropos* of the hand just discussed, I asked Clay's permission to publish his opinion in *The Field*, with his name attached.

He replied as follows:—

"MY DEAR JONES,—I feel it a compliment that you make use of my letter, though I should have written it more carefully if I had anticipated print.

"Your objection to the trump lead is strong. It would have been decisive, if I fully agreed with

your premises, but I don't think it wants 'an angel' to refrain from returning the trump lead. I think that most very good players, say Petrie, Storey, Hermann, and many others, and I am sure yourself, would not return the trump unless strong in hearts. 'The queen of trumps' they would say,—'rather a queer card,—can't possibly be a singleton,—almost sure to be the bottom of tierce major. Why doesn't he go on? He wants to show me his strength in trumps, but has weak suits,—his hearts the best,—he wishes to see whether I can help him there, or anywhere else—and leaves me to decide whether it is well to draw the trumps.

"This appears to me very simple, all the more simple that it is the first card played, from which every one looks for some inkling as to the general scheme of the hand. I should most certainly reason thus, but you flatter me in saying that I alone should do so. You would, undoubtedly, unless you were playing carelessly, and so would many other players, less good, and less given to reflection than yourself.

"Think of this; the card,—itself unusual,—the changing suit,—all call for thought in the partner, and seem to say,—'Now think a bit, and mind what you are at,—don't play like — — —, *machinalement*.

"*Quæ cum ita sint*, the queen of trumps if your

partner is a very good player,—a heart if he is not. My mind is made up, and I won't unpack it.

“I don't say that in a similar difficulty, later in the hand, similar reflections would pass through my mind. They ought to do,—but one has generally taken up some idea, or scheme, which one does not readily abandon. The first card! This makes a great difference—does it not? It comes on you just as you are putting things in order for the general scheme. You must think then, if ever.

“I think you'll come round to my notion, though you mayn't confess it,—at least, not in print.

“Yours very truly,

“JAMES CLAY.”

It appears to me that we were as nearly agreed as possible; but Clay assumed that, with certain partners, the trump lead would be safe to be understood, while I assumed that it would probably be misunderstood.

I am still in doubt as to the best lead, but think that with ‘an angel’ for a partner one round of trumps, as a feeler, would be right. This was Hermann's view, a man of deep Whist perception.

With ninety-nine partners out of a hundred, or

even nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand, I think the heart would be the right lead.

These arguments result in a very singular conclusion, viz., that the suit to be led originally,—the first card of the hand,—will sometimes depend on who is your partner.

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The question is often put to me, “ Why did you choose the *nom de plume* of ‘Cavendish’ ?”

I can honestly say that on first rushing into print I had no idea any particular value attached to the copyright of a small book, or to an author’s *nom de plume*. So I gave the matter of pseudonym but little thought, and stuck down on the title-page the name of a club where I used to play small Whist.

Assistance received from Clay has already been acknowledged; and it may be added that almost every book bearing my *nom de plume* is more or less indebted to several friendly helpers.

In the case of Whist, the idea of publishing hands played completely through is not mine; nor is the scheme mine of giving reasons and arguments for all the principles of play, instead of stating them, as was previously done, in the form of isolated and arbitrary conventions. I have only clothed with words,—and indeed not always that—the results of the discussions of E—— W——,



D—— J——, W—— D—— G——, and C—— B—— C——, all valued friends, and members of the “little school” that obtained notoriety in 1871, in consequence of an article on Whist which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, in January of that year.

The writer of that article said,—

“Between 1850 and 1860, a knot of young men at Cambridge, of considerable ability, who had at first taken up Whist for amusement, found it offer such a field for intellectual study, that they continued its practice more systematically, with a view to its complete scientific investigation. Since the adoption of Short Whist, the constant practice of adepts had led to the introduction of many improvements in detail, but nothing had been done to reduce the modern play into a systematic form, or to lay it clearly before the public. Its secrets, so far as they differed from the precepts of Hoyle and Matthews, were confined to small coteries of club-players. The little Whist-school held together afterwards in London, and added to its numbers; and, in 1862, one of its members brought out the work published under the name of ‘*Cavendish*.’”

Now, to an article in the *Quarterly* there is no direct reply, as correspondence is not there permitted. It seems, however, that a writer in the *Morning Post* took umbrage at the above-quoted

passage ; and in that paper he poured out the vials as follows:—

“ ‘Cavendish,’ who, in his modest preface, makes no profession of originality so far as rules or principles are concerned, strange to say, does not so much as allude to the ‘little Whist-School,’ to which he must have been so largely indebted. Stranger still, none of the most celebrated Whist-players appear to have been aware of the existence of this school, nor of any school that could possibly have formed an epoch, within the last twenty years. \* \* \* That Graham’s, the greatest of card-clubs, did nothing to reduce the modern play into a systematic form—leaving it to be perfected, not by the Portland, the next greatest of Whist-clubs, but by a knot of young men at Cambridge—is one of the most startling paradoxes I ever remember to have met. Shades of Granville, Sefton, De Ros, Deschappelles, Aubrey, George Anson, Henry Bentinck, John Bushe, Charles Greville ! is it come to this ? Why, of the greatest living players there is hardly one who did not graduate in honors more than twenty years ago. And Whist is much in the same condition as art, literature, statesmanship, eloquence, and fashion. Its brightest illustrations belong to a preceding generation, or to one that is fast dying out.

“ AN AMATEUR.”

To this I replied in the *Morning Post*, as under:—

“I ask space to set your readers right with the ‘knot of young men’ who are rather unkindly dealt with by ‘An Amateur.’ Your correspondent insinuates that this set of young men ignored Graham’s and the Portland, and all former rules and principles, and went to work to elaborate a theory of their own, independently of all the most celebrated players, and that, in consequence, they compassed the complete development of the game of Whist, and brought it to its present scientific state. This is a most unfair way to view the discussions of half-a-dozen private gentlemen, who really did not know that they were doing anything but enjoying themselves over a half-crown rubber. Moreover, it [‘An Amateur’s’ letter] is a *travestie* of the story in the *Quarterly*. \* \* \* The writer in the *Quarterly* does not assert that all, or even the greater part, of the improvements in the game, since the time of Hoyle, were originated by a knot of young men at Cambridge. All he states is, that, through the agency of these young men, it happened that the game was first presented to the public in a systematic form. The *Quarterly* Reviewer admits that the secrets or principles of the modern game were known to coteries of club-players. All he contends for is that they had never been published, or, to quote

his own words, 'laid clearly before the public.' \* \* \* Your correspondent says that, in my preface, I make no allusion to the 'little Whist-School,' to which I 'must have been so largely indebted.' The reason is obvious. The gentlemen referred to by the *Quarterly* certainly did not consider themselves a 'school' in the sense of being founders of an epoch in the game. They merely met together and discussed, according to their lights, the ideas of the best players to whom they had access; and I, as one of them, must plead guilty to having ultimately thrown out the results of such discussions in the form of a systematic treatise."

W—— D—— G——, one of the little school, also wrote to the same effect. He added two points of detail—viz., that the little school consisted originally of five members; that they began to study the game in 1854; and that, as they could not find any treatise in existence from which the game could be learnt, they habitually referred points of difficulty to the leading players of the Portland Club,—notably to Mr. Clay,—though other members kindly gave their opinion from time to time.

To these letters "An Amateur" responded to the following effect:—

It was far from his thoughts to hurt the feelings or deny the merits of the little school. The



tendency of his remarks was to show that they did nothing extraordinary, elaborated nothing, compassed nothing. They were doubtless as surprised to hear they had been creating a system or advancing a science, as M. Jourdain was to find he had spoken prose all his life without knowing it. But the morning after the appearance of the *Quarterly* they awoke and, like Byron after the publication of "Childe Harold," found themselves famous. "An Amateur" specially contests, with several arguments, the proposition asserting or assuming the marked influence of the school; and, inasmuch as they regularly referred to the Portland in their difficulties, the very utmost they could have done was to suggest the production of a systematic treatise to their Corypheus, who naturally consulted the highest authorities, oral and written.

There was no further correspondence in the *Post*. But other papers took up the subject. A leader appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, which is so cleverly and amusingly written that I make no excuse for quoting it *in extenso*:—

"DAILY TELEGRAPH," January 31, 1871.

"In the midst of these wars, and rumors of wars, it is pleasant to find that in the world there is yet room for hostilities of a less sanguinary kind. Whilst all are looking for the latest telegrams from

Versailles, a few can still busy themselves with letters, and replies to letters, in the great Whist-Controversy. The question seems to be this: To what degree of credit are the five 'Friends in Council' entitled, who, from the year 1854 or thereabouts, met in secret conclave, and meditated much on the problems presented by this attractive game? The practical outcome of their deliberations is to be found in the little treatise on Whist which bears the honored name of 'Cavendish.' We have all read that valuable book, but without being at all aware that we were treading on dangerous ground. The article in the last number of the *Quarterly Review* seems to have originated the dispute in the columns of a fashionable contemporary—or, more properly speaking, the dispute has grown out of it. Did 'Cavendish' and his four friends constitute a school? Did they pretend to be a school at all? Was there any learned Whist before their day? or had such learning as existed merely fallen into desuetude in consequence of the changes in the theory and style of play? In fact, what had been done before the time of 'Cavendish' and his friends, 'to reduce the modern play into a systematic form, or to lay it clearly before the public'? Many rash and misguided persons may be of the hasty opinion that here is the old story of a storm in a teapot. With what amount of laurel shall the head of the

gallant 'Major A——' be crowned? What has 'Cœlebs' of the Portland done for the world in general and Whist-societies in particular? Is 'Cavendish' a true man, or a mere buckram pretender, and his four friends aiders and abettors in the sham? We will say nothing about the venerable Hoyle, who might have deserved the respect of 'Sarah Battle' and ladies and gentlemen of her standing—but who, for us, is clearly out of date. But how about Mathews? Time was when we used to hear Whist-adepts rave about Mathews. If Mathews were with you it signified not if all the world were against you. We do not affect to speak with authority, but our surmise would be that real Whist-antiquaries would even in the present day recognize the merits of a writer who stood between the two systems. For modern use, and by modern usage, we should say that there are three treatises upon Whist which are habitually referred to and quoted by players. The first in date would be that of 'Major A——,' published originally in 1835. Then we have 'Cœlebs,' who hails from the Portland, and who dates from that sacred locality, in 1858. Finally, we have the little treatise of 'Cavendish,' which seems to be of the year 1862. At any rate, one of the angry disputants, who does not appear to be partial to 'Cavendish' and his friends, asks in a high strain of moral indignation,

‘Was there no treatise in existence from which the game could be learnt prior to 1862?’ Now, as this is a stone hurled into the little camp of the ‘Cavendishes,’ it does not seem to be a rash conjecture that the year named was the one in which they enlightened mankind, for the first time, on the subject of “Short Whist.” At any rate, if we are wrong upon this important point, most persons will agree with us in thinking that it does not much matter. We make no mention of Mr. James Clay, the *vir pietate gravis* of Short Whist. Why should he be drawn into the dispute save for honorable mention?

“One can’t help thinking of the old story of Uncle Toby and the Fly. There surely was room enough in the world for ‘Major A——,’ ‘Cœlebs,’ and ‘Cavendish.’ Why should such clever fellows fall out, and upon the subject of a mere game? So it is, however. Of ‘Major A——’ in person—whether he be an actual warrior still on half-pay—or, as one may say, a gallant ghost—we need say nothing; but we should presume that the ‘Major’ had been snatched away from his club long ago. Dr. Pole, however, wrote a preface to the treatise of ‘Major A——’ in 1864, and appears to have observed a contemptuous silence with regard to the efforts of the ‘Cavendish’ clique or school. This was rather ill-natured, but is a mere trifle when compared with the general



fierceness of 'Amateur,' a devoted partisan of 'Major A——,' who dates from the Athenæum Club in the present year. 'Amateur' can only see through 'Major A——'s' spectacles, and hates the poor Cavendishites, as one may say, like poison. Surely it is a little spiteful to lug in the unfortunate and celebrated Tailors in Tooley-street because 'Cavendish' and his friends were originally five in number—that is, writes 'Amateur,' 'two more than the Tailors in Tooley-street.' 'Cavendish' might reply, in the same humorous way, that 'Amateur' was two less than the Tailors in Tooley-street. Of course, it is not for us to say whether Dr. Pole meant mischief to 'Cavendish' and his party when he wrote in 1870,—'Never once alluding to "Cavendish" and his school'—as follows: 'Some of the later works published on Whist have been more explanatory than the early ones, but still they have consisted at best of merely practical rules without reference to their theoretical basis.' This, in the opinion of 'Amateur,' is a *coup-de-grâce* to 'the little school and their Corypheus.' Well, then, as 'Major A——,' or at least the Major's friends, appear to think so slightly of other Whist-pundits, let us see in what estimation he and his work are held by competent men. Here is an expression of opinion from 'Cœlebs' of the Portland. The public, we are very confident, will forgive the

quotation—it reads so like the utterance of one old German Grammarian against another who entertained perilous views on the subject of a second aorist. Listen to ‘Cœlebs’: “The introduction of Short Whist called forth in 1836 the work known under the *nom de plume* of ‘Major A——.’ With verbose augmentations, the author’s instructions are nearly identical with those of Mathews, like whom he despises any approach to methodical arrangement, continually repeating similar maxims, separating exceptions from rules, and examples from both, jumbling original data with derivative results, presenting altogether such a labyrinth of advice and apparent inconsistency as no pupil can easily unravel. A ‘little learning’ is the sure result of such immethodical treatises not embracing any general outline before descending to minutiae.” So far, ‘Cœlebs’ on ‘Major A——,’ who is dear to ‘Amateur,’ who again scorns ‘Cavendish’ and his friends, and who suggests by implication that they are tailors.

“Surely all this is a little foolish, inasmuch as we have never even heard it suggested that the object of any of the parties was to hold himself out as the author and proprietor of the stock work upon Whist. Such a course would be intelligible enough on obvious grounds; but here is rather a question of vanity than of profit. The strictures of ‘Amateur’ roused ‘Cavendish’ from

his rubber at the Portland. He writes a little on his own account, but a good deal on behalf of his friends. He exclaims against the propriety of bringing them before the public at all, inasmuch as they simply met to play their rubber for half-crown points, and never assumed the character of a school at all. True it is, as 'Cavendish' and they were jointly interested in the game, they used to discuss together any points which might arise, and endeavored to raise themselves to the level of modern practice. The result of their discussions was the treatise of 'Cavendish,' but they had arrived at their results by fair reasoning and by referring points of difficulty for the judgment of the leading players at the Portland Club. 'In this way they became acquainted with the latest developments of the game.' 'Cavendish' claims that the modern game was first presented to the public in a systematic form in consequence of these discussions and these references. He does not pretend to have invented what was new. The principles of the new game were well known to coteries of club-players: 'Cavendish' did his best to collect these, and to lay them before the public in a systematic form. This it is which puts 'Amateur' in such a towering passion, since it is his opinion that 'Major A——,' as his work was developed, had done all that was necessary under this head. The publication of the article in the

‘Quarterly,’ which was favorable to the pretensions of ‘Cavendish’ *cum suis*, furnished the immediate occasion of this dispute. Ordinary people have derived occasional help from these treatises, though it is not often that the moderate player in real life sets himself down to consider on what principle he should avoid leading from ace, knave, or ten. The thing is so, and there is good reason for it; but the higher learning of the game has little interest for any but professional players—if the word may be used without offence. As the matter stands at present, the question seems to be, Was ‘Major A——’ or ‘Cavendish’ first in the field with an exposition of the secrets of the new play which, until a certain date, were confined to the reverend bosoms of aged club-players? There are men living who should be able to decide this knotty point; in the meanwhile, it is far from disagreeable to get back to the old quarrels in which ink, not blood, is shed. In such controversies as the one now raging between ‘Amateur’ and ‘Cavendish’ there is no bitter end.”

The *Daily News* also had a leader, which, though agreeable reading enough, adds nothing to the points of the controversy, and *Bell's Life*, *Figaro*, *The Queen*, and the *Westminster Papers*, each contributed their *quantum* of praise or blame, seriousness or chaff, according, I presume, to the



frame of mind of the writers of the various articles.

I will conclude this rather long effusion with *The Field* version of the discussion:—

“THE FIELD,” Feb. 4th, 1871.

“A rather amusing pen-and-ink contest has arisen this week on the subject of Whist. The questions seem to be whether before the date of ‘Cavendish’ the game of Whist had ever been treated on a systematic basis, and whether the gentlemen whose discussions were published by ‘Cavendish’ are entitled to the credit of having exerted any marked influence on the Whist of the present day. We are inclined to the view that the first question should be answered in the negative, and the second in the affirmative. Had the knot of young men referred to in the *Quarterly* never met, there would have been no ‘Cavendish,’ and perhaps no Clay, no Pole, no article on Whist-players in *Fraser* nor in the *Quarterly*, no card department in *The Field*—in short, no modern scientific Whist published to the world. We direct our readers to a letter from ‘Cavendish’ in another column, which will enable them to judge as to the rights of this pretty little quarrel.”

I make no apology for quoting my own letter, which ran as follows:—

" *To the Editor of The Field.*

" SIR,—I trust I may be excused for entering on some personal matters in relation to Whist. You are of course aware that in the *Quarterly Review* for January appeared an article on modern Whist, containing a learned account of the history of the game, and concluding with a review of certain books.

" In the course of the historical essay the following passage occurs:—

" 'Between 1850 and 1860 a knot of young men at Cambridge, of considerable ability, who had at first taken up Whist for amusement, found it offer such a field for intellectual study, that they continued its practice more systematically, with a view to its complete scientific investigation. Since the general adoption of Short Whist, the constant practice of adepts had led to the introduction of many improvements in detail, but nothing had been done to reduce the modern play into a systematic form, or to lay it clearly before the public. Its secrets, so far as they differed from the precepts of Hoyle and Matthews, were confined to small coteries of club-players. The little Whist-school held together afterwards in London, and added to its numbers; and, in 1862, one of its members brought out the work published under the name of "Cavendish."'

" This passage has been the subject of com-

ment during the past week in several newspapers of high standing; the points raised being, Did the 'knot of young men' originate, or elaborate, or compass anything? or did they draw their inspiration from other sources, and merely arrange what was well known and procurable before?

"I think the knot of young men did originate something, and I believe that the result of their discussions when put into book form was more than a re-arrangement of previously existing matter.

"In order fairly to decide as to what was novel in their work, we must first notice what had been previously done. Prior to the appearance of our treatise—I say 'our,' for without the valuable assistance of members of the little school I alone should not have rushed into print—the treatises in vogue were those of Hoyle, Matthews, and 'Cœlebs.'

"Of Hoyle it is impossible to speak but in terms of high praise, notwithstanding that his style was somewhat obscure. His advice is mainly correct—wonderfully so, if we consider that in his day the game was in its infancy. As an example, he pointed out that with king, queen, knave, and one small card the proper lead is the king; but that with two small cards the proper lead is the knave. There was, however, but little method in his treatment, and but little argument in his

pages. He confined himself to stating cases, without entering into principles. I do not mean to say that he did not explain the reason for the difference in the two leads given as an example. He did so; but he stopped there. He did not generalize. The generalization of the above rule would be, that if you lead from a sequence, and desire your partner to win the card led, you should lead the lowest of the sequence; but that if you desire him to pass the trick, you should lead the highest. Nothing of this kind will be found in Hoyle.

“Matthews or Mathews (for the name is spelt differently in different editions) carried out a plan similar to that of Hoyle. He stated many cases of great interest, and cases containing much instruction. As an example I may quote from memory the following:—‘Q. Having ace, knave, ten, and a small card, second hand, a small card being led, what should you play? A. In plain suits the small card; in trumps the ten. The reason is that a small card is never led from king, queen, in plain suits; consequently one of those cards must be in the third or fourth hands, and the ten would be played to no purpose. But in trumps, king and queen may both be in the leader’s hand.’ Matthews, like Hoyle, has no system, and he never refers to general principles. In fact, he only professes to give a selection of cases.



“Of ‘Major A——’ I say nothing. ‘Major A——’ is merely Matthews done into Short Whist, with irrelevant additions. Thus, when Matthews says ‘nine all,’ ‘Major A——’ says ‘four all,’ and when Matthews says ‘with queen, knave, put on your knave,’ ‘Major A——’ says ‘do not put on your queen;’ and so on through the whole book.

“‘Cœlebs’ also gives cases and instructions, but there he stops; he never rises to principles. He was, however, well aware of the want of method in previous treatises. He arranges the subject judiciously, his defect being that he omits to trace the cases to their true source.

“Now, without for one moment underrating the services rendered to Whist by the authors referred to, I assert that the great fault in the manner of teaching which runs through them all is, that the rules of play are laid down by these writers in the form of isolated and arbitrary cases, and that the general principles which overlie all these cases are never fully stated, though they are occasionally hinted at; and hence the acquisition of knowledge from those books depends rather on effort of memory than on occupation of the understanding. Rules alone, however correct, if not thoroughly comprehended, are often mischievous, as circumstances may require them to be departed from. In such position the player

by mere rote is all at sea ; but the one who knows well the process of the derivation of the rules on which he acts has little difficulty in meeting and dealing with exceptional cases.

“ What I claim, then, by way of originality for the book of ‘ the little school ’ is that, so far as in us lay, the reasoning on which the principles of play are based is given logically and completely. In this I believe that ‘ Cavendish ’ differs materially from all prior treatises ; and if this is admitted, it follows that the knot of young men did originate, did elaborate, did compass something.

“ As far as details are concerned I fancy ‘ the little school ’ also did something ; but this is a minor matter, and it is not denied that from time to time fresh details have sprung into life, and that some of them are considered improvements. Therefore, I will not enter into details.

“ But before closing this letter, I should like to put on record (since the subject is before the public) how it happened that a knot of young men, who merely met to enjoy and discuss a rubber, ever went into print at all.

“ When we used to meet in London, notes were occasionally made of points which interested us, and some experiments were tried, such as matching two bad players against two good ones, an account of which has already appeared in *The Field*. On other occasions, and for a long time,

every hand was played out to the end, and the result put down on paper, in order to enable us to calculate the odds at different points of the game. The results of this experiment have also appeared in *The Field*. During these experimental rubbers we accumulated a lot of MSS. As far as I remember, we had some hazy and undefined idea of publishing some day; but no one seemed to care about writing a book, and the papers were thrown into a drawer, and remained there, half forgotten for several years.

“It so happened, however, that in December, 1861, there appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* an article on cards, recommending and describing Piquet and Bézique; the latter was then scarcely played in this country. In a foot-note the writer expressed an opinion that some games at Whist might be advantageously published, on the same plan as that followed with games of chess. I happened to read the article, and I wrote to the author of the paper, offering to lend him the MS. notes of the little school. This offer he accepted; but I found, on rummaging them out, we had taken so much for granted in our memoranda that it was necessary, in order to make any one else understand them, to rewrite and to add copious notes. Presently I found that I had to repeat the same note; so, in order to save the trouble of re-writing all the reasons for, say, causing A to lead

from his strongest suit, I erected this into a principle, argued it out, and afterwards referred to principle 1. This was the skeleton of the book; and, on being urged to publish, I obtained the co-operation of the members of 'the little school,' and, aided by their remarks and suggestions, appeared as an author. And, having talked a good deal about myself, I would add that, whatever originality there may be in our 'labor of love,' the credit is mainly due to my friends, towards whom I stand only in the relation of a mouthpiece.

"THE AUTHOR OF 'CAVENDISH ON WHIST.'"

---

The experiment just referred to, viz., the matching two good players against two bad ones, was undertaken in order to ascertain approximately the advantage of skill. It arose and was conducted as follows:—

In the latter part of the winter of 1857, during an after-dinner conversation, it was remarked by some of the party that Whist is a mere matter of chance, since no amount of ingenuity can make a king win an ace, and so on. This produced an argument as to the merits of the game; and as two of the disputants obstinately maintained the original position, it was proposed to test their powers by matching them against two excellent players in the room. To this match, strange to



say, the bad players agreed, and a date was fixed. Before the day arrived, it was proposed to play the match in double, another rubber of two good against two bad players being formed in an adjoining room, and the hands being played over again, the good players having the cards previously held by the bad ones, and *vice versa*, the order of the play being, of course, in every other respect preserved. The difficulty now was to find two players sufficiently bad for the purpose ; but two men were found, on condition of having odds laid them at starting, which was accordingly done.

On the appointed day, a table was formed in room A, and as soon as the first hand was played, the cards were re-sorted and conveyed into room B. There the hand was played over again, the good players in room B having the cards that the bad players had in room A. At the end of the hand, the result was noted for comparison, independently of the score, which was conducted in the usual way. Thirty-three hands were played in each room. In room A, the good players held very good cards, and won four rubbers out of six ; in points, a balance of eighteen. In room B, the good players had, of course, the bad cards. They played seven rubbers with the same number of hands that in the other room had played six, and they won three out of the seven, losing seven points on the balance. The difference, therefore,

was eleven points, or nearly one point a rubber in favor of skill.

A comparison of tricks only showed some curious results. In seven of the hands the score by cards in each room was the same. In eighteen hands the balance of the score by cards was in favor of the superior players; in eight hands in favor of the inferior. In one of these hands the bad players won two by cards at one table, and three by cards at the other.

The most important result is, that at both tables the superior players gained a majority of tricks. In room A, they won on the balance nineteen by tricks; in room B, they won two by tricks.

It will be observed that this experiment does not altogether eliminate luck, as bad play sometimes succeeds. But by far the greater part of luck, viz., that due to the superiority of winning cards, is, by the plan described, quite got rid of.

Dr. Pole (*The Field*, June 16, 1866) arrives at a result nearly the same by a statistical method. He writes to this effect:—

“It is very desirable to ascertain the value of skill at Whist.

“The voluntary power we have over results at Whist is compounded of—1. The system of play; 2. The personal skill employed.”

The modern system, which combines the hands of the two partners, as against no system (the per-

sonal skill of all being pretty equal), is worth—Dr. Pole thinks—about half a point a rubber, or rather more. About nine hundred rubbers played by systematic as against old-fashioned players gave a balance of nearly five hundred points in favor of system.

The personal skill will vary with each individual, and is difficult to estimate; but looking at published statistics, in which Dr. Pole had confidence, he puts the advantage of a very superior player (all using system) at about a quarter of a point a rubber. Consequently, the advantage due to combined personal skill (*i.e.*, two very skilful against two very unskilful players, all using system) would be more than half a point a rubber.

The conclusion arrived at by Dr. Pole is that “the total advantage of both elements of power over results at Whist may, under very favorable circumstances, be expected to amount to as much as one point per rubber.”

Now, at play-clubs, nearly all the players adhere more or less closely to system, and the great majority have considerable personal skill. Consequently, only the very skilful player can expect to win anything, and he will only have the best player at the table for a partner on an average once in three times. It follows from this that the expectation of a very skilful player at a play-club will only average, at the most, say a fifth or a sixth of a point a rubber.

January, 1879.—In Mortimer Collins' "Life," published not long since, it is stated that I told him I had played 20,000 rubbers in ten years, and that I had won £2,000.

I will not enter into the question of the propriety of publishing gossip of this kind, and of giving names without permission. I am not ashamed of having played on an average half a dozen rubbers a day, nor of having won. But, had I been asked, I should have certainly refused permission to make my private affairs public. Many goody-goody people might think me very "horrid" to waste so much time at the card-table, and to play for so much money.

The statement published by Mortimer Collins' widow is mere talk, and is devoid of all scientific interest. The amount of money won or lost is not any criterion of the result, unless the amount of the points is given, and the stakes are never changed. What is interesting is, to know what percentage of advantage or disadvantage attaches to the individual in consequence of his personal skill or the want of it. The way to arrive at this is to keep an account of a long series of rubbers; the longer the series, the more closely the result will approximate to the truth. Even when arrived at, the answer will only be true for the individual, as against the set with whom he is in the habit of contending. Deschappelles estimated his



advantage at Long Whist at a quarter of a point a rubber. My averages, at Short Whist, are not nearly so good as this. But then Deschappelles was *facile princeps*, and Long Whist gives greater scope for play than Short. Again, I am in the habit of avoiding tables where the players are not pretty good. This must, of course, affect the averages.

My averages are as under. I should premise that the rubbers to which the account refers were all played at clubs where good play was the rule. Whatever the results may be worth, I give them from January, 1860, to December, 1878:—

Played in all	.	.	.	30,668 rubbers.
Won	.	.	.	15,648 “
Lost	.	.	.	15,020 “

---

Won . . . 628 rubbers.

Or, on the average, won one rubber in forty-nine, a trifle over two per cent.

The points give the following averages:—

Won in all	.	.	.	85,486 points.
Lost	.	.	.	81,055 “

---

Won . . . 4,431 points.

Or, on the average, as nearly as possible, one seventh of a point a rubber.

The average value of a rubber is rather more than five points and two fifths (5.43). The average value of rubbers won is 5.46 points; of rubbers lost, is 5.40, giving a difference of six-hundredths (or about one seventeenth) of a point per rubber in favor of winning rubbers over losing ones.

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January, 1879.—During the last sixteen years I have answered in writing nearly 10,000 questions on the laws of games, chiefly Whist. But other games are often the subject of queries. My interrogators seem to think I ought to know the rules of all games, from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter. With a little trouble I generally manage to find some one who can inform me who is the best authority on bumble-puppy or some other outlandish game, when I in turn become an interrogator.

Some of the questions are very droll. The following, from a lady in the country, a total stranger, came to hand about Christmas, 1877:—  
“May teetotallers join in the game of snap-dragon?”

FINIS.



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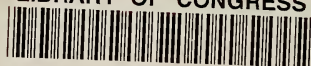






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